





# MY BOOKS

★

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RESPONSIBILITY  
BLESSED ARE THE RICH  
GEMEL IN LONDON

## *Belles-lettres*

L. OF C. (LINES OF COMMUNICATION)  
FANTASIES AND IMPROMPTUS  
WHITE HORSE AND RED LION  
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SPEAK FOR ENGLAND

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EGO  
EGO 2  
EGO 3





*Photo Angus McBean*

*The Author*

*Fr.*

# E G O 4

*YET MORE OF  
THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
OF*  
**JAMES AGATE**

As my stuff settles into shape, I am told (and sometimes myself discover, uneasily, but feel all right about it in calmer moments) it is mainly autobiographic and even egotistic after all—which I finally accept, and am contented so.

WALT WHITMAN



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TO  
MY BROTHER  
HARRY



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## 1938

*July 21*      Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer must be mad if they expect me to like the underbred film they have made out of *Froufrou*, Meilhac and Halévy's piece in which I saw Bernhardt close on fifty years ago.

I remember three things about Sarah's performance. First, the charm of the early scenes. Even that dry dragon William Archer could write of Sarah at this period, "She was certainly an exquisite creature." The second thing I remember is the great quarrel scene between the feather-headed Froufrou and the sober Louise, and how the younger sister's retorts rang out like pistol-shots. The third memorable thing was, of course, the death scene. Even so, that very fine critic the late W. T. Arnold thought that Modjeska's was the better dying : "Its great merit was the continued thought of the child at the dying woman's feet ; Sarah Bernhardt forgot him too soon."

But I am writing as though Bernhardt had created the part. She did not. Froufrou was first played by another actress, about whom Jock has just given me a rare little book. This is Emile de Molènes' *Desclée, Biographie et Souvenirs*. The author quotes Pierre Véron's criticism in *Charivari* of Aimée's performance :

Mademoiselle Desclée avait jadis traversé le ciel dramatique en nébuleuse de si mince importance, que personne n'y avait pris garde. Chose étrange, c'est en Italie et en Belgique qu'elle devait parisianiser son talent, qui aujourd'hui est un des premiers entre les premiers. Après avoir assisté à sa rentrée dans *Diane de Lys*, MM. Meilhac et Halévy comprirent qu'ils étaient sauvés. Ils avaient vu juste. Froufrou vit telle qu'ils l'avaient conçue, plus saisissante peut-être qu'ils ne l'avaient conçue. Pour *Froufrou*, on peut dire que les auteurs ont eu un troisième collaborateur inattendu. Ce collaborateur, c'est Mademoiselle Desclée.

Elle ne joue pas, elle vit. C'est la nature, encore la nature, toujours la nature. Quelque chose du brio fantaisiste de Déjazet, quelque chose des nuances de Rose Chéri, quelque chose . . .

And here is Sarcey, in the *Gaulois* :

Comme les trois premiers actes ont été joués ! Nous savions bien, nous qui avions suivi Mademoiselle Desclée dans ses représentations de *Diane de Lys*, tout ce qu'elle valait ; mais le grand public l'ignorait encore. Ce fut hier comme une révélation. Jamais on ne fut plus femme du monde sur la scène. Quelle bonne humeur élégante au premier acte ! Quelle énergie violente au troisième, et non pas l'énergie d'un caractère bien trempé, mais celle d'une enfant mal élevée et irascible, celle de Froufrou. Voilà Mademoiselle Desclée passée au premier rang.

Now Desclée in her private life was not in the least like Froufrou. Her favourite author was Balzac, her favourite novel *Le Lys dans la Vallée*, and her favourite heroine the lugubrious Comtesse de Mortsauf. Dumas's funeral oration was conceived in the grand style. He began by quoting the famous stanzas of de Musset to that great singer whose name I can never for long keep out of these diaries. He went on :

Ce que de Musset disait de la Malibran, nous pouvons et nous avons voulu le redire, avec lui, de celle que l'on appelait déjà la Desclée. La cantatrice et la comédienne ont eu la même âme avec des expressions différentes. Il n'a manqué à la seconde, pour être égale à la première, que d'avoir eu toujours à interpréter des chefs-d'œuvre. Ce n'est pas sa faute si Mozart lui a fait défaut . . .

And he ended :

Diane, Froufrou, Lydie, Séverine, Marcelina, Césarine ! Où es-tu ? Rien ne répond. Fermez les yeux, regardez-la une dernière fois dans votre souvenir, vous ne la reverrez plus. Cette voix énigmatique qui vous enveloppait et vous enivrait à la fois comme une musique et comme un parfum de l'Orient, écoutez-la une dernière fois dans le lointain—vous ne l'entendrez plus jamais. Il ne reste rien de ce qui fut cela ! . . .

Des détails de sa vie réelle, je ne vous ai rien dit. Où

est-elle née? Comment a-t-elle été élevée? Où a-t-elle débuté? Où est-elle allée? Qu'importe! Une femme comme celle-là n'a pas de biographie. Elle nous a émus, et elle en est morte: voilà toute son histoire!

“*Elle nous a émus, et elle en est morte.*” These words affect me indescribably. Reading them I hear again Sarah’s voice, and the words she is saying are those Dumas gives to Marguerite:

Vous direz un jour qu’il y avait quelque part une femme qui n’avait plus qu’une espérance, qu’une pensée, qu’un rêve dans ce monde, et que cette femme a renoncé à tout cela, a broyé son cœur entre ses mains et en est morte.

Never again shall I hear Marguerite tear out her heart on the word *broyé*. “*Il ne reste rien de ce qui fut cela.*”

*July 25* A full day:  
*Monday.*

- 9.0 to 11.0. Titivate *Ego 3* and my pot-boiler to be called *Bad Manners*.
- 11.0 , , 12.30. Write 1000 words for *Ego 4*.
- 12.30 , , 2.0. Dictate 1000 words for my next pot-boiler, provisionally called *Women Never Play Fair*.
- 2.0 , , 2.30. Lunch.
- 2.30 , , 3.0. Arrange for temp. chauffeur, Charles having been hit in chest by starting-handle just as I am leaving for alleged holiday.
- 3.0 , , 7.45. Read four books. Write 1250 words for *Daily Express*. Slog out to
- 8.15 , , 10.45. Richmond Theatre. This is what Basil Macdonald Hastings called being the dramatic critic for *Asia Minor*.
- 10.45 , , 11.15. Slog back again.
- 11.15 , , 12.45. Café Royal.
- 12.45 , , 2.45. Consider and dictate to late-working Jock matter for to-morrow’s speech at the Manchester Grammar School prize-giving, where I am to hand out the books.
- 3.0. Bed.

July 26 Another full day:  
Tuesday.

- 7.0. Get up.
- 8.0. Start to motor to Manchester.
- 12.15. Arrive Manchester. Change togs, lunch, rewrite speech, and
- 2.30. Shake hands with 200 boys, give them their prizes, and deliver speech.
- 4.30. Start for Whitby.
- 7.30. Arrive Whitby.

July 27 According to the *M.G.*, my speech went down *Wednesday*. all right. Long report and short appreciative leader. It was not the first time I had spoken from the Free Trade Hall platform. At the Speech Day of 1896 I mounted those steps to recite Don Diégue's great speech from *Le Cid*. This raised a tremendous laugh, because, like Sarah Bernhardt on her visit to London in 1879, I began on too high a note.<sup>1</sup> Yesterday I told the boys how in that hall I remembered hearing Joe Chamberlain deliver his famous "pin-prick" speech. And how he said, "Will the young gentleman sitting on the fifth ventilator on my right kindly get down?" And how I had been that young gentleman! When they sang *Forty Years On* I wasn't nearly so much moved as I expected to be. Forty-three years ago I howled at the notion of what it would be like to come back in forty years. Lo and behold, yesterday afternoon I felt nothing, except for a twinge when the High Master called me "sir."

<sup>1</sup> Le premier soir Mlle Sarah Bernhardt jouait, en guise d'intermède, le second acte de *Phèdre*. Il paraît qu'au moment d'entrer en scène, elle fut prise d'une de ces peurs bleues qui paralySENT quelquefois les artistes. Elle tomba à la renverse, à demi pâmée; et ses camarades passèrent dix minutes à rappeler, par d'énergiques frictions, la chaleur aux extrémités qui s'étaient subitement refroidies. On la porta en scène plutôt qu'elle n'y entra. Elle attaqua, comme il est naturel dans les moments d'émotion forte, la première note trop haut; une fois cette tonique admise, c'est une sensation que les artistes connaissent bien, il fallut la garder comme base du morceau tout entier. La voix dut partir de là et s'élever, à mesure que les sentiments qu'elle avait à exprimer croissaient en force et en pathétique; l'artiste fut réduite à crier; elle précipita son débit, elle était perdue. (*Journal de F. Sarcy*.)

*July 28* I refuse to touch pageants with barge-poles, even *Thursday*. if it be an authentic pole out of the actual barge that took King John to Runnymede. How can those be Hengist and Horsa when we know them to be young Mr Pepper and young Mr Salt, the obliging assistants from the local grocer's? How can yonder stout party hope to be Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough—" His Grace returned from the wars this morning and pleasured me twice in his top-boots"—when we know her to be the vicar's sister and quite unpleasurable? Pageants are permissible only when everybody is pageanting and nobody is looking on. I do not deny their utility in so far as the pageanteers are concerned. They resolve complexes and release inhibitions. They satisfy the Snittle Timberry in us. What all this means is that I have just come back from Scarborough's open-air Pageant of Tannhäuser, acted in the middle of a lake. I sat in the front row with my feet almost in the water, and enjoyed it very much.

*July 29* Motoring with my brother Harry, who is warding *Friday*. off a nervous breakdown, the result of over-work.

Lunched at the King's Head at Darlington. A very sound hotel. Good, plain food with excellent coffee, well served by a pretty, shy, efficient young woman. Thence to Wensley, where I was in camp in 1915. Not a sign of there ever having been camp or war.

Visited the antique shop at Leyland, where there is an admirable private museum, though I am by nature sceptical about such things as " Fragment of Hotspur's Skull." Bought a " View of Antigua on Ivory," which I sent to Hermione Baddeley, because of her song about Antigua in the revue at the Little Theatre; a picture on glass of a " Balloon Ascent from Kenilworth," which Monty Shearman would give hundreds for if it were by a French impressionist and *not* on glass; a Staffordshire John Milton, which I may give to Jock; and a sedan chair eight inches high with carved ivory panels, bevelled glass windows, and containing a tiny liqueur bottle. This I shall certainly keep for myself. All for £2 5s. Noted a piece of wood, the size and shape of a large olive, attached

to four inches of leather thong. The assistant not knowing what this was, Harry said with authority, "It's a Roman uvula-polisher, fourth century." Harry pretends that when he passed the shop after tea the polisher was in the window duly labelled as such. From which piece of fooling I gather that he is recovering.

On the top of a particularly lonely moor passed a little pub at which, on a cycling tour five years ago, Harry and a friend stopped for a drink. The pub, he told me, had seemed deserted. They knocked on the counter, and, as nobody came, knocked again. Then the landlord appeared and said, "Sorry to keep you gentlemen waiting. My wife has just died." I insisted on going in. No customers, and nobody behind the bar. Only a black cat sitting on the counter, and nothing to be heard but the tick of an invisible clock. I rapped, and nobody came. I was about to rap again, when I noticed that Harry had already got back into the car. I followed him.

Harry told me that in connection with a slum-clearance scheme last winter he came across a room which ran over five cottages. None of the tenants below had ever bothered about it, and one said that so far as he knew the room was empty and had been for years, the property having changed hands half a dozen times, and successive landlords losing sight of this garret. On the door being forced it revealed itself as a joiner's workshop. The tools were neatly arranged on the bench. On a peg hung a working jacket. Dust everywhere. The calendar on the wall bore the date August 10, 1914.

*July 30* Home again. 240 miles in a day is too much  
*Saturday.* motoring for me. At Doncaster had the worst,  
slowest, and exasperatingest lunch in my experience.

*August 7* Last week was the first time I had attended the  
*Sunday.* Malvern Festival. Although I had heard frightful  
accounts of previous years, I had no notion that it could be such a bore. This year it took place in a heat wave, and the moment the day became bearable was the moment for

shutting oneself up in what must be one of the hottest theatres in Europe. Playhouses whose aim is to ventilate modern opinion should begin by ventilating themselves : a sure way to stifle thought is to asphyxiate the thinker.

As a relief from the dull strenuousness Peter Page, Bertie van Thal, and I sneaked off after the Wednesday matinée to Birmingham, where Seymour Hicks was playing. After the theatre we bore him off to supper at the Queen's Hotel, where Peter told us a yarn which he protested was true. He was on a cruise, and the boat stopped at a tiny islet in the Marquesas, visited every five years or so. Going ashore, he encountered on the beach a youth wearing nothing but a pair of soiled shorts. Peter told him in his best French all about the Atlantic flights of Hughes and Corrigan. "I suppose," he added, "in view of your isolation, you must find it a great treat to talk to anybody?" The young man, who had done nothing but stare, said in broad Cockney, "I don't know wot you're talking abaht, sir. I'm a steward on B deck."

Next day I took Peter and Bertie to a tiny country show, at which we made friends with two charming little girls aged about eight and ten. When Ego came into the ring they said, "Nice horse!" When the other animals entered they said, "Nasty horse!" "Ugly horse!!" "Silly horse!!!" And they clapped so hard that Ego won. Their mother asking me if a show Hackney was worth a lot of money, I said, "Dear lady, I would swop my animal for your two little girls. But not for one of them."

After which back to the treadmill again, something relieved by golf. The *Daily Telegraph* (Darlington) and *Evening News* (Bergel) challenged the *Observer* (Ivor Brown) and the *Sunday Times* (J.A.). The challengers won by two matches to one, helped by appalling play by me, and in spite of the fact that most of Bergel's tee-shots finished in the whins at silly short-leg! His drive has gone to pieces, largely through having more hinges in it than a sardine tin. But he could always play his iron shots, and his never-ending chatter must be worth at least two holes to his side.

The only good thing that has come out of Malvern so far as

I am concerned is a highly intelligent young man by the name of John Irwin, who looks exactly like Stephen Haggard, and is tackling dramatic criticism on resources consisting of unlimited confidence and fourpence in cash. He is to return with me to Villa Volpone and understudy Jock, who is going to Dublin for the Abbey Theatre Festival.

*August 9* Interminable discussions with Leo Pavia as to *Tuesday*. where we shall go for a few days' holiday, which means sitting in a hotel bedroom working from nine till six, with a round of golf snatched in the evening. Cornwall, Paris, Wales, and Blackpool all debated. Finally we settle on Felixstowe.

*August 10* Lowestoft. John Irwin turns out to be another *Wednesday*. version of the young man in *Ah, Wilderness!*

He is so anxious to know what my next sentence is going to be that he entirely fails to grasp the one I am dictating. However, he seems to have some faint idea of what my writing is about, and Jocks are not made in a day. When the work is over, and he is no longer trying to please, his talk about drama, music, the cinema, and so on is of such brilliance that Leo and I listen in abashed silence.

*August 14* This place is admirable for working in ; there are *Sunday*. no counter-attractions. On Thursday I did not get out of my dressing-gown until four o'clock, when I motored over to Caister and had a round on the very nearly first-class links. Fourteen years since I played there. On Friday the same thing, except that the golf was at Southwold. Dull, with a stinking little ditch to be crossed and re-crossed half a dozen times. George Mathew came down for dinner, and Leo talked till two in the morning without stopping. "Why aren't there stop and go signals for talkers like Leo ?" asked George.

Saturday was spent in doing what sights there are. This means Oulton Broad, on which people sail and sail with no object except sailing, and Blundeston Rectory, which, of

course, is *David Copperfield's* Rookery. These exhaust Lowes-toft's 'places of interest,' let Messrs Ward, Lock and Co. say what they will.

Norwich Cathedral is poor after Worcester. Almost no monuments, and the north wall of the Cloisters has been disfigured by gaudy reproductions of the arms of descendants of those present in 1578 when Queen Elizabeth dined in the Cloister. Who cares? The new gilt and the over-bright colouring are horribly out of tone with the rest. The escutcheons, if that is the right word, look as though they were being borne in one of the late Julian Wylie's pantomimes. One very good window, "erected by the officers of the King's Own Royal Regiment, Norfolk Yeomanry, in memory of their fallen comrades of all ranks." This is recent, and has two panels depicting modern trench life, with stretcher-bearers, one soldier cleaning a rifle, another on the fire-step, and a third carrying a bucket. The middle panel shows the classical soldier, in armour and leading a horse, with a sleepy village in the background. Also noted a monument erected in 1585 to one Osberto Parsley, cathedral organist for fifty years:

Here lies the Man whose Name in Spight of Death  
Renownèd lives by Blast of Golden Fame . . .

I walked round the new Town Hall, which is a gaunt brick building with a lean clock-tower vaguely suggesting U.S.S.R. architecture. (Except that from all one hears they don't use time in Russia.) On the back of the building, overlooking the market, are three colossal statues carved in a material which looks like sandstone mixed with margarine. The middle figure has a crenellated beard like Herod—what has any of that family to do with life in Norwich?—and on each side is a wife or concubine with Struwwelpeterish offspring at foot. We asked the stallholders what the figures were, but they had no idea. Inquiries at the fire station were equally fruitless. Apparently nobody in Norwich knows why the figures are there or what they are. The whole building is wildly out of harmony with its surroundings, though I admit the problem is a difficult one. I see no solution except keeping new architecture

out of old surroundings until you are ready to pull down and rebuild the lot.

This afternoon visited Aldeburgh, whose guide-book talks about coast erosion. But a worse thing than coast erosion is memory erosion. We asked twenty people which was the cottage belonging to Posh, the old boatman and Edward Fitzgerald's crony. None of them knew anything about the cottage, Fletcher—to give Posh his real name—or the poet. Finally Leo said, "I'm not going to be defeated. I'm going into a house to ask." He then knocked at the door of an ordinary-looking brick villa residence, and lo, it was the very place we were looking for! The owner, a doctor, explained with great courtesy that the house had been built over and round the cottage, which was now his dispensary and consulting-room, both of which he showed us. Just as we were leaving, the car-park attendant, an old man of seventy-seven, told us that he remembered both Fitzgerald and Posh. About the latter he said, "He was an old man nobody couldn't do as they liked with!"

August 15 Landon Ronald died yesterday. He was a conductor of the third rank, which sounds so much better than saying he was third-rate; on the principle adopted by motoring books for rating hotels he would have been awarded three stars. There was one respect in which Landon outshone all other conductors. This was in the gleam of his shirt-front and the gloss of his enormous cuffs, out of which peeped tiny, fastidious fingers. He made music sound as if it too had been laundered, and like the good drawing-room conjurer that he was he had nothing up his sleeve except his baton. His best song, *Down in the Forest*, is a chocolate bonbon filled with *crème de menthe*—the only tree in it is the potted palm of the artists' room. Landon was by nature a *boulevardier* and a *flâneur*, a supple man of the world who would have been equally successful as ambassador or head waiter. A first-rate conversationalist with plenty of synthetic bonhomie and natural Jewish wit.

August 20 A letter from Jock:  
Saturday.

*Jury's Hotel, Dublin*  
16th August, 1938

MY DEAR JAMES,

Thank you for a most agreeable and welcome letter.

Taking Dublin 'by and large,' I should say it was the dearest and the dirtiest city in Europe. It's much dearer and much dirtier than Amsterdam, for instance.

I'm not really likin' it at all, at all, as yet. I'm actually relieved that another of the dark, familiar brood of London critics is here as well. For it is Lionel Hale, and he is the most clever, witty, ingenious, generous, complimentary, entertaining, and engaging jackanapes.

The best food here is at a restaurant called Jammet's, which would pass muster in Brussels. Lionel, arriving late there for lunch yesterday, had the apology: "Better late than Jammet!"

Thy  
JOCK

August 22 The Coliseum's reversion to Variety reminds me Monday. of Sarah Bernhardt's first reaction to the proposal that she should appear on the halls: "Between monkeys, not!"

August 23 Sibelius night at the Proms. The *Tempest* Tuesday. Prelude is the very genius of storm, the gale on a rock-bound coast, the roar of breakers, the howl and sob of the wind, the scream of sea-birds. You just don't believe the orchestra is using ordinary instruments and notes. The equivalent in sound of

The sky, it seems, would pour down stinking pitch,  
But that the sea, mounting to the welkin's cheek,  
Dashes the fire out.

I found myself wondering whether, after such unleashing of the elements, our advocates for modern-dress Shakespeare would still want to see Miranda in beach-pyjamas and beret chatting to a Prospero in mackintosh and sou'wester. Coming out, I heard one sweet young thing say to another, "My dear,

I just can't cope with Sibelius." I know how I should cope with this young lady. I should bastinado her with flutes, box her ears with cymbals, and lash her with a cat-o'-nine-tails made out of the strings of double-basses.

August 25 Letter to Alan Dent :  
Thursday.

*Villa Volpone*

10 Fairfax Road, N.W.6

25th August, 1938

DEAR JOCK,

How long do you expect me to go on making my bricks without your straw? I am now dictating quite ten thousand words weekly, and leaving Irwin to parcel them out among newspapers, books, and advertisements as he thinks fit.

Irwin is the most zealous, indefatigable, well-intentioned, assiduous, devoted, inaccurate, and incompetent secretary any man could have. Everything he types teems with errors, as you will doubtless perceive. In the matter of spelling, Tony Baerlein is a pedant in comparison. In other words, he's a thoroughly nice boy. But seriously, are you coming back? If not I must at once set about finding some brainless, competent person.

The galley proofs of *Ego 3* have been read for literals by George Mathew, and by me for everything else. I did my reading snipe-fashion, which is less wearing for the nerves, but I think I've covered the whole book. Eddie Marsh has again offered to read it in page, so I think one reading by you will do. I took George to Southend for the week-end, and we had a terrific go at the book, as the result of which I have cut out a further fifteen thousand words. It is now shorter than *Ego 2*, the relation being that of Sibelius's Third and Second Symphonies. By the way, his *Tempest* Overture two nights ago left me quite wordless. It was stupendous, and exactly like a wild night at Blackpool out of the season. La Brunskill was there too, clapping on every inch of tulle, and singing *Ham Peggotty's Ballad*, or whatever it's called.

I note that you say nothing about my new column in the *Express*. I attribute this—according to my mood—to brackish scorn or waspish envy. Considering that I am

simultaneously dictating this letter and perlustrating—Walkley's word—about *Thérèse Raquin*, I am probably trying Irwin pretty high! By the way, he is the nephew of the Lieutenant Robinson who brought down the first Zeppelin in the last war. He carries his late uncle's V.C. in his pocket, and this afternoon showed it to Fred.

Ever,  
JIMMIE

Sept. 1 Jock returns, and we meet at the first night of *Thursday*. Charles Morgan's *The Flashing Stream*. Unnatural and priggish; in intention, and compared with the average West End piece, noble. Shall do my best to drag people in to see it.

Sept. 2 Taking them by and large, the notices of Charles's *Friday*. play are a disgrace, only Darlington appearing to have any notion of what it is about. One of the young wits said: "This isn't a play—it's an outfit supplied by Morgan and Ball's." Even Jock fails me in the M.G. by getting entangled in a long parallel with *H.M.S. Pinafore*. I know exactly what happens in these cases. Some wretched analogy winds itself octopus-like round your neck, and in the forty minutes which is all the daily papers allow a critic there is just not time to get rid of the damned thing, and there you are strangled by what, given more time, might have clicked into place as a felicity. Some few weeks ago I took Jock to task for taking on board a tremendous analogy from Meredith which promptly stove in his little craft. Aphorism for critics: Be simple about the abstruse, and you can afford to be abstruse about the simple.

Lunched at Eddie Marsh's flat, the other guests being Christopher Hassall and Jock. The talk turned on that overrated poet Rupert Brooke, whom I place in the same category as Dowson. Jock supported me, saying that though R.B. was an excellent minor poet, his success was due less to his poetry than to his profile and early death. Eddie insisted on reading two of the sonnets to us in a voice which made them sound like *The Owl and the Pussy-cat*.

Dined with Oliver Messel, who was full of a project for turning Bath into a theatrical Glyndebourne, and Peter Glenville, who talked a lot about sincerity in acting.

Sept. 6 From Brother Edward :  
Tuesday.

There is a Funeral Furnisher at Pimlico in whose window stand three bags of confetti.

This is the first of my new series : *L'Ecole des Morts.*

Sept. 7 A letter :  
Wednesday.

DEAR MR AGATE,

If you don't like manufactured faces what a lot of pleasure you are missing ! Nothing put ON a face can spoil it. It's only what's INSIDE it, or isn't inside it, that can spoil it. Nearly all faces are beautiful, some exquisitely so. Look at the Indian faces, men and women, how lovely they are. They have an advantage over ours in not distracting attention with colour-detail and being all form.

At the age of three I had a Greek nurse who fed me on black coffee, fried cheese, and hard-boiled eggs. He had been a brigand, and still had the whiskers. And I have never, so to speak, looked back.

Yours truly

Sept. 9 Sixty-one to-day. Jock keeps my birthday with his *Friday.* usual charm, wit, and unexpectedness. This is the fourth day he has shut himself up in his flat with the index to *Ego 3*, as the result of which I do not see him. But I hear from him. At eleven roses arrive. At three o'clock comes a record of Scriabin's Sonata No. 4 in F sharp major, Op. 30. This is followed at seven by Antoine's *Mes Souvenirs sur le Théâtre-Libre.* I can see that this last gift is going to keep me up half the night.

Sept. 10 It does, and since nobody in England remembers Saturday. —if, indeed, anybody ever knew—anything about that most gallant adventure, I shall reproduce the gist of the *Souvenirs* here.

In 1887 the French theatre is in the hands of Augier, Dumas, and Sardou. But the managers are getting anxious, for the triumvirate is showing signs of failing power. The battle for modernity, already won in the novel by the naturalists, in painting by the impressionists, in music by the Wagnerites, is ready to invade the theatre. Who shall give the signal? The answer is an employee at a gas company, by the name of André Antoine. He begins by enlisting the sympathies of Zola, Léon Hennique, and Paul Alexis, each of whom gives him a play for production in a miserable cubby-hole in the Passage de l'Elysée-des-Beaux-Arts. The cubby-hole is the billiard-room at the back of a café, whose owner consents to light it with one gas jet from half-past eight to midnight on condition that each of the actors takes a consommation! Next, our employee goes to the office of the *Figaro* and demands to see the *courriériste des théâtres*. The gossip writer, shocked at the audacity of so miserable a scarecrow, receives him with disdain. Nevertheless next day he gives him half a column. In the meantime rehearsals have greatly intrigued Zola, and certainly Antoine knows what he is about when he arranges that one of the four pieces composing his programme shall be *Jacques Damour*, the dramatization by Hennique of a short story by the great writer, and which, as luck would have it, has just appeared in the *Figaro*. To the dress rehearsal Zola brings a number of friends, including Alphonse Daudet. The rehearsal ended, Antoine gives his arm to Daudet, limping a little in his descent of the *passage*. At a turning Daudet stops and, pointing to a window, says, "Antoine, I see ghosts in your street to-night! That is the house where I first met the trollop who became the heroine of *Sapho*." The first night is an enormous success. Zola, Daudet, Hennique, Chincholle, La Pommeraye, Denayrouze, of *La République Française*, and Aubry-Vézan, of *La Petite République*, are there. Next morning there is a magnificent article in the *Figaro*, by Henry Fouquier, concerning this "théâtriculet perdu au fond de Montmartre"! Now success follows success. Sarcey writes to apologise for non-attendance. He has been engaged at a conference at Lille, and for

proof encloses his railway ticket. Porel, who has previously turned down *Jacques Damour*, announces that he will put the play on at the Odéon. All of which does not prevent the director of the gas company from regarding his employee “avec des yeux terribles” !

Now Antoine is in the middle of an advertising campaign at which Hercules would have boggled. He has written a little brochure and has persuaded some quixotic publisher to print two thousand copies. The idea is for Antoine to send a copy to each of the persons who subscribed for the recent performance of *Lohengrin*, got up by Lainoureaux. To prevent these busy and wealthy people from confounding the brochure with the usual prospectus Antoine decides to write a letter to each—not a circular letter, but an individual appeal written by hand and running to four pages. As he has not enough money for stamps he delivers the appeals personally, at night, after the day’s work. In fourteen days he writes and delivers thirteen hundred letters. Starting out on his postman’s round at ten o’clock at night, he finishes at six in the morning. Since it is more important than ever, in view of the increasing ferocity of the gas company, that he should be at his work strictly on time he dare not trust himself to go to bed, which means that he goes to sleep standing. Swaying on his feet, it takes him five minutes to find the letter-box in which to drop his thirteen hundredth letter—addressed, incidentally, to the most wide-awake man in France, a certain Monsieur Clemenceau. How many answers is it reasonable to suppose Antoine receives ? The reader has guessed right. Not one !

Nevertheless Antoine continues to rise in the world. With the help of the devoted Emile Paz, he rents a large studio with a staircase of its own. His theatre has two dozen subscribers, permitting him to pay something on account for rent and lighting. The invaluable Paz has found a furniture dealer who will hire out on credit three dozen chairs and some curtains. One of the stage properties is a divan on which Antoine sleeps at night, for though he is going up in the world artistically, he is still on the social ground floor. Or rather, he has no ground floor ; he must sleep in the studio. And the gas

company? Antoine has left it. Anybody inquiring for him at the office is to be told that he has *mal tourné*. Nevertheless for a penniless producer Antoine is doing pretty well. A certain Madame Auberon de Nerville is in the habit of giving receptions. She has the notion of presenting, at one of these receptions, a performance of Henry Becque's *La Parisienne*, with Réjane. Will Antoine do her the kindness of playing the principal part opposite Réjane? And here is a charming cameo. Réjane is a little difficult, not with her fellow-player, but with her author. "Moi, je ne ferais pas ceci." Or, "Moi, je ne dirais pas ça." Becque solves the difficulty by putting his arm round Réjane's waist and waltzing her round the room.

From Réjane it is only a step to Bernhardt, who receives Antoine reclining on a *chaise longue*. From under the furs with which she is entirely covered she makes show of interest in the Théâtre-Libre, of which she has never heard. Antoine would make her realise how useful she can be to him, since she has a public which will follow her wherever she leads. And why not in the direction of his theatre? He reminds her of an article in which Mendès has just reproached her with taking no part in the battle for the new theatre. Sarah is not impressed. Antoine mentions a piece called *L'Abbesse de Jouarre*, in which the leading rôle has been played by a celebrated Italian actress, la Duse. At this moment an old lady appears from behind the *portière* which gives into the next room. Sarah, turning to her, asks her if she remembers this actress. The old lady replies, "Ah, oui! Ah, oui! La Duse, pas fameuse du reste."

Two years later. The date is January 12th, 1890. Antoine dines with Zola, who says to him, "You ought to have a look at an article by Jacques Saint-Cère about a Scandinavian author whose new piece has created an enormous sensation in Germany." Again Antoine wastes no time. Next day he writes to Saint-Cère, who tells him that the piece is a study on heredity by one Henrik Ibsen, and that it is called *Ghosts*. Three weeks later Zola promises to find somebody who knows Norwegian and will translate the piece. A fortnight later still

a Monsieur Hessem, a fair-haired, shy, neurotic little person, turns up with a translation and a note from Zola saying the piece is "une curiosité sinon aussi retentissante que *La Puissance des Ténèbres*, du moins d'un intérêt aussi vif pour les lettrés." On March 15th Antoine, anxious to compare this translation with the original text, has recourse to one Rodolphe Darzens, who says, "I have a literary friend who travels in timber for a house at Le Havre, and who knows Norway like the back of his hand. If I ask him he will make me a word-for-word translation." Two days later comes the news that the Independent Theatre of London has produced the play, and that the entire English Press has found it immoral and of a revolting obscenity. On April 20th Darzens brings along his literal translation, and Antoine finds a world of difference between this and Hessem's version. Darzens also brings with him a letter from Ibsen himself, authorizing the use of Darzens' version. A month later the piece goes into rehearsal, and the first performance takes place on May 29th, 1890, with Antoine as Oswald. He writes, "For the majority of the audience the first shock of astonishment was succeeded by boredom, giving place towards the end of the play to extreme tension and the deepest emotion. I can only speak from hearsay; I underwent a new experience—that of not realising what was going on. From the beginning of the second act I remember nothing of the play or its effect on the public. For some time after the fall of the curtain I was unable to regain possession of myself. The piece makes a considerable noise despite the public's lack of understanding and Sarcey's jibes." But is Antoine discouraged? Not at all. He immediately puts *The Wild Duck* into rehearsal!

Four years later Antoine's debts threaten to overwhelm him. He goes to a banker, who makes him a present of 5000 francs, which are, alas! a drop in the 100,000 franc ocean. The end of the book finds Antoine and his company stranded at Rome. Yet 1894 has not been an entirely unlucky year for him. In the early part of it he attends the guillotining of the anarchist Fortuné Henry. Originally it is Henry's intention to throw a bomb into the stalls of the Théâtre-Français.



Photo Cross Brothers

*At Café  
By Guevara*



But the length of the queue prevents him from getting in. So Henry descends the Avenue de l'Opéra seeking an opportunity of getting rid of the bomb, which is still in his pocket. Proceeding along the boulevards, he comes to the Café Americain, where he recognises Antoine dining with Mendès and Pedro Gailhard. In gratitude for a pleasant evening spent at the Théâtre-Libre he refrains from throwing his bomb. Turning into the Rue Halévy, he gains the Gare Saint-Lazare, and annihilates several people taking their apéritif in the café of the Hotel Terminus.

*Sept. 13* Have decided that I don't like the Chirico which *Tuesday*. Monty gave me for the new house, and am changing it for a Guevara which I have long coveted. M. very nice about this.

*Sept. 14* War scare. At 2 a.m. this morning I was *Wednesday*. awakened by the hoarse cry of a newsboy. I was glad I did not miss that cry ; it gave me a thrill of excitement the like of which I had not experienced for twenty-four years. I was *not* glad the newsboy was crying war news. I was glad I did not miss the excitement.

*Sept. 15* The Prime Minister has flown to Germany to see *Thursday*. Hitler.

*Sept. 24* Nine days of one crisis after another. This after-*Saturday*. noon a middle-aged gentlewoman looking like a character in a Dodie Smith play acted by Muriel Aked called to measure me for my gas-mask. She expressed herself as quite ready to be killed at her job : " How can man die better than facing fearful odds ? Lord Macaulay, you know. I learned that verse when I was a girl. Still quite apt, don't you think ? "

*Sept. 26* Started to make a dug-out in the back garden. Not *Monday*. a man to be had in the Labour Exchanges, so Fred Leigh, two of his ex-music-hall friends, and the temporary chauffeur have started in.

If there is going to be another war what about slogans? Let other nations keep their peckers up with invocations to the spirits of patriotism and glory. For the phlegmatic Englishman "Business as usual" is still the best slogan. That is why I motored to-night to Banbury, to open an Academy of Dramatic Elocution presided over by Shayle Gardner. That the mood is general was proved when, on going this afternoon into a shop to inquire about oilskins for protection against mustard-gas, I saw a young man trying on a top-hat. After the lecture I was taken to supper at the White Lion. Old-school host, lively modern hostess, ferociously intelligent daughter, très Bloomsbury. Inn full of antiques with sixty Windsor chairs picked up at anything from half a crown to thirty bob. South Kensington once offered a hundred pounds a chair for the collection, and America an open cheque. Both offers refused. Returning, saw first lot of soldiers constructing something by the roadside shortly after one, and a second lot at Uxbridge just before two. Eerie and unbelievable.

*Sept. 27* Aubrey Hammond at lunch read a letter from his *Tuesday*. brother saying that the British Consul had advised him to leave Paris. The launching of the *Queen Elizabeth* by the Queen at Glasgow gets one-twentieth of the space in the papers it would normally get.

Bought a substitute for cellophane paper, all the stocks of the real thing being sold out. This is for making a gas-proof room indoors. Discovered this afternoon that all the bags for sand have also gone. Fred Leigh knowing a girl at the grocer's, we have got sugar-bags, to be cut up and made the right size. Slogan about business as usual is weakening! Have postponed trying on my new suit in spite of Hector Powe's advertisement in to-night's *Evening Standard*: "The tonic of new clothes will be greater now than at any other time within recent memory." Cannot make up my mind whether I ought to volunteer for something, and, if so, what.

Everybody remembers the Russian troops which during the last war passed through England without anybody seeing

them, though everybody knew somebody who saw them. In the first interval of to-night's new play, *Official Secret*, Charles Morgan told me that his stockbroker's brother had arrived this afternoon from Berlin with the news that anti-war rioting had broken out on a colossal scale. Then what about the marvellous boy, locked away and carefully guarded, who has discovered a ray which will turn the petrol in the tanks of *enemy* aeroplanes to water?

I hereby propound what I venture to call Agate's Theory of War Rumours: Whenever in war-time a thing is desirable and feasible the rumour will go round that it has occurred, and will obtain credence among intelligent and stupid alike. Whenever a thing is desirable and infeasible the rumour that it has occurred will obtain credence among the vulgar only.

*Sept. 28* Great difficulty in procuring corrugated-iron *Wednesday*. sheets for the dug-out. Got the last six in the neighbourhood.

The warning not to dance in gas-proof rooms during a raid is not as unnecessary as it sounds, and to ask how people could do such a thing is just foolish. Of course they would do it! I should probably try to keep a grip on myself by turning on the gramophone, and I recognise the existence of the half-witted to whom dancing means what music means to me. The way people are taking things provides the most astonishing contrasts. While I am feverishly turning my back garden into a credible imitation of Flanders my neighbour mows his lawn!

*Sept. 30* The crisis came to an end at 12.30 A.M. to-day, *Friday*. when Hitler, Mussolini, Daladier, and Chamberlain reached an agreement. I cannot help it if the last reminds me of Dickens's General Choke: " 'We are a new country, Sir,' observed the General. 'Man, Sir, here is man in all his dignity. Here am I, Sir,' said the General setting up his umbrella to represent himself—and a villainous-looking umbrella it was, a very bad counter to stand for the sterling coin of his benevolence—'here am I with grey hairs, Sir, and a moral sense!' "

Oct. 7 Of the sane things which have happened during the *Friday* past fortnight I remember chiefly the Henry Wood Jubilee Concert at the Albert Hall. This was like the Scotsman's description of a singed sheep's head, "a deal o' fine, confused feedin'." Garnishings of Bach, Beethoven, Handel, and Wagner to honour two noble modern English dishes of Bax and Vaughan Williams, with Sullivan and Elgar to take off the covers and put them on again. As a sweet, Rachmaninoff in person handed round his C minor piano concerto. Odd thing about these mammoth concerts and mammoth halls—the four orchestras and four choirs seemed to make less noise than one orchestra and one choir at the Queen's Hall. On the other hand, the *pianissimo* passages were most effective. Our old friend, the echo, was in great form, and there was a moment when one feared that the Valkyries going might collide with the Valkyries coming back. The ensuing party at Grosvenor House was extremely gay. I sat between Violet Vanbrugh, still divinely tall and still divinely fair, and her sister Irene, whose stage radiance is but a pale reflection of her natural self. Irene wore a dress of a shade subtly compounded of pillar-box, vermillion, and lobster, because, as she very rightly said, "If you're going to wear a red frock take care that it's redder than any other frock in the room." At the same table were Moiseiwitsch, grave and unbending with a mask like a sphinx playing poker, and his exquisitely pretty wife, who possesses that rare thing among Russians—vivacity. Then the Hambourgs. Dolly Hambourg told me how they had that day flown from Ireland. The 'plane had risen to 10,000 feet to avoid the gale, and then, getting ice on its wings, had come down to within 400 feet of the Irish Sea. Neither she nor her husband had flown before. "I went with Mark because I thought he might be nervous. But the pilot said afterwards that what made the 'plane rock was not the weather, but Mark's jokes!" Mark did not hear this because he was describing to the table how he had seen a kettle-drummer at the other end of the room eating cold chicken with two forks, and out of habit drumming between mouthfuls! A great gathering in honour of Henry, a man who has

done more for music in England than anybody else, including doubling the wages of orchestral players.

*Oct. 8* Alexander Galt, my young painter friend, has *Saturday*. arrived from Scotland. Has won the Carnegie Glasgow Art Scholarship against all comers, and is going to spend the £140 studying in Paris. I like him very much. He is plain, unassuming, modest, yet possessed of a wholly Scotch self-confidence. I took him to see Monty Shearman's pictures, of which he was most drawn to the Vuillards, because, as he said, "I paint that way, only better." Gave him two volumes of reproductions of pictures by Manet and Renoir, and sent him off to Paris with a lot of warnings and my blessing.

*Oct. 9* Came down to Brighton with Leo Pavia and Julian *Sunday*. Phillipson. Leo in great form. Apropos of *Ego 3*, he said, "You needn't be afraid of actions for libel. Everybody in it is either dead or half-dead." For years Leo has been proclaiming how he too is in love with easeful death. The world events of the past fortnight having brought on his old heart trouble, I asked him why he should worry about the imminence of a consummation so devoutly to be wished. He said, "What I look forward to is not a violent death, but dying in the normal way, with my head in the gas-oven!"

*Oct. 16* The war scare has kept out of this diary things *Sunday*. which ought to have been recorded in it. Such things as that Sherwood's anti-war play, *Idiot's Delight*, was among the first to be taken off. As in most things, there are two views here. The sympathetic view is that the theatre is escape, and that when a man has spent his afternoon digging a trench against bombs he doesn't want to spend his evening seeing a play about bombs. The cynical view is that what the Englishman fears even more than bombs is a serious play. Also I have not been able to write about my astonishing volte-face at the Old Vic, where, in spite of the modern costume, I found the most moving

performance of *Hamlet* in my experience. The play, not the title rôle. Why Alec Guinness deliberately avoided "acting" *Hamlet* is a complicated business which I analyse in to-day's *S.T.* In pursuance of Agate's Law of being Simple about Abstruse Things I re-wrote to-day's article in bed on Saturday morning, delivered the re-fashioned article late, and was soundly rated by Hadley for holding up the machines. It seems that the paper had to be got away extra early owing to the railway strike. Which prompts the reflection that only in a democratic country can workers indulge in a strike at a time when the nation is in need of every ounce of energy.

*Oct. 17 Postcard from Brother Edward :  
Monday.*

I hear that, during the recent crisis, on moving a chest at No. 10 Downing Street containing armistice proposals, peace treaties, disarmament memoranda, and other belligerent phantasmagoria they found—a dart-board !

*Oct. 19 It's an ill wind, etc. Met John Irwin to-day, Wednesday.* who tells me that at the height of the crisis he blew into the office of the *New Statesman* and found everybody too much unnerved to sit in a theatre or hold a pen afterwards. Whereby he applied for, and was immediately given, a job as dramatic critic.

*Oct. 22 Fred insisted on going on with the dug-out, which Saturday.* is now finished. Its internal measurements are fifteen feet long by six feet wide by eight feet high. Concreted one foot thick throughout, with concrete roof and five foot of clay on top. Cost £100.

*Oct. 24 Lectured to the Midland Institute at Birmingham. Monday.* Audience of about seven hundred and fifty. The secretary warned me, "When they're bored they go out in droves!" A few people went out, but nothing approaching a drove. Afterwards looked in at the Prince of Wales Theatre for the second half of *Under your Hat*, with

Cicely Courtneidge and Jack Hulbert. I thought this poor, except for a spoof patriotic tune by Vivian Ellis which sounded like a blend of Elgar's *Land of Hope and Glory* and Leslie Stuart's *Soldiers of the Queen*, and made a mock at both.

*Oct. 25* Spent an hour at the Birmingham Art Gallery.

*Tuesday.* Good study of a Canadian soldier by John, and magnificent bronze head of Conrad by Epstein.

Much moved by four Pre-Raphaelite pictures all hanging together—Holman Hunt's *Finding of Christ in the Temple*, Ford Madox Brown's *Last of England*, Brown's replica of *Work*, and Hunt's *Shadow of Death*. It is quite possible that, to the modern eye, the super-photographic way of painting is nonsense. But these four pictures at least show nonsense attaining to genius. And then they take me back to the time when I was fourteen and had the walls of my bedroom covered with prints of Burne-Jones and, of course, over the mantelpiece Watts's *Hope*. Even then I had the suspicion that Watts was dud, and I have never agreed with Montague's dictum that his canvases can hang in a cathedral without looking silly. I have seen them hanging in St Paul's, and they *do* look silly. Visited the farm, and found the horses all right. Took Albert to lunch at the Queen's, and then a long trek home in the fog, arriving back in time for the Toreador's Song at the Bizet centenary performance of *Carmen* at Sadler's Wells. I dislike the notion of Escamillo grabbing Carmen by the hand and making her act the second verse with him. When I was at the mill I learned lip-reading, which enables me to see Carmen's lips shaping, "You don't say!" and "Well, I never!" Supper in honour of Bizet at the Café Royal. Jock, Julian Phillipson, and Bertie van Thal. The socialites, the Covent Garden-ites, and the Glyndebourne-ites ignored the occasion, of course. First-class article in the *Manchester Guardian*; the London Press inadequate as usual. Not a line in to-day's *Times* or *Telegraph*, and I am not concerned if they had a hole-and-corner reference last Saturday, or are going to have one next Saturday. *To-day* is the

centenary of Bizet, and it's to-day that I want to read about Bizet. Have dug up one of the Paris notices of that first night sixty-three years ago :

*Carmen* n'est qu'une hideuse drôlesse qui, pour être empruntée au roman de Prosper Mérimée, n'en fait pas moins mauvaise figure sur une scène habituée à plus de respect pour la morale et la pudeur. Que pensez-vous, chastes mères de famille, bons bourgeois qui comptiez sur la foi du passé, régaler vos femmes et vos filles d'une petite soirée anodine et décente, que pensez-vous, dis-je, d'une ignoble gueuse offrant d'un regard provocant son amour à qui-conque a le don de lui plaire—et Dieu sait si le nombre est grand de ces mortels favorisés!—convolant d'un muletier à un dragon, d'un dragon à un toréador . . . Ce rôle infect de cette Célimène de trottoir est joué par Mme Galli-Marié . . .

Not a word about the music. Which reminds me that at the first performance in Manchester of Elgar's *Gerontius* I sat behind two Roman Catholic priests and gathered from their conversation that they had listened only to Cardinal Newman's words.

Oct. 27     *Ego 3* published.

Thursday.

Nov. 1     Reception at the Finnish Embassy in honour of Tuesday. the Sibelius Festival. Utterly lost among the Garters and Orders, I did not know a soul, and presently a Madame de Something, English in everything except name, took pity on me, penned me in a corner, and discoursed at length of the theatre, the *Sunday Times*, Hilaire Belloc, and how any religion which comforts one must be true. Presently she asked who I was, and when I told her said, "Please forgive my curiosity. *But what do you do?*"

In the afternoon went to Moiseiwitsch's flat to hear his recording of the Emperor Concerto. He received enormous praise in the Press recently for the poetry of his rendering, but I think he poetises too much. The *pianos* should be the solici-

tudes of a gruff German bear; Benno makes the *fortes* the harsh awakenings of a dreamer.

No. 1 of my *Nouveaux Contes Scabreux*. The model, of course, is Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's *Nouveaux Contes Cruels*: At a banquet given to celebrate the award of the Order of Merit the octogenarian recipient makes a speech in which he boasts that he has always discarded his mistresses as soon as they arrived at the age of consent.

Nov. 2 Set out for a short lecture tour in Southport *Wednesday*. and neighbourhood with Leo Pavia, who held forth at length on inaccuracies in the musical world. For example, Johann Strauss's operette is called not *Der Waldmeister*, but *Waldmeister*. This means not *The Forest Ranger*, but *Woodruff*, which is a sweet-scented herb. The whole point of the operette, says Leo, is concerned with the effect of the herb on the characters, whom it makes dance. Leo was present at the first performance in Vienna in the late nineties, and saw the old man conduct the Overture.

Southport fascinates me. It was here that I first saw *The School for Scandal*, wore my first London-made suit, and had my first semi-serious illness, a fierce attack of tonsillitis, not improved when the young and pretty night-nurse jumped into bed with me, starched cuffs and all, and stayed there. I was nineteen, and such a hellish little prig that next morning I begged the doctor to send her away! My lecture, on Bad Manners, took place in the Congregational Church. It went off fairly well, though I hadn't reckoned on delivering it from the pulpit. Audience composed of pigtailed schoolgirls, grinning schoolboys, and several hundred stolid burgesses with their wives.

Nov. 3 Same lecture to the members of the St Anne's *Thursday*. Women's Luncheon Club. Went much better.

The worst part of lecturing is afterwards. (I see to it that there is no before!) When I've given my performance it's over. "Jetzt hab' ich euch eine Kunst gegeben," as Wagner said at Bayreuth. I work like a horse to entertain

the audience *as an audience*; as individuals and total strangers they don't interest me, and I hate being on show. Churlish? Not at all. I just haven't got the talent for basking.

*Nov. 4* Still at Southport. Had the car driven half a mile *Friday*. along the sands in search of the sea. Couldn't go farther because of quicksands, but still no sign of the ocean. Watched the antics of a seagull which kept on picking up a shell, dropping it from a height, and swooping down to see if the plan for getting at the inmate had succeeded. After a time I shoo'd the bird away, and, picking up the shell, saw a quivering red object like a pistil. I wonder whether Wells is right in saying that low organisms, having neither emotions nor memory, are equally unable to enjoy pleasure or suffer pain. A few yards away two louts were digging for sand-worms, which they found at a depth of *sixty* inches. Some of the worms are eighteen inches long, and they showed me sections of nine or ten inches from which they had removed the stomachs, or whatever it is worms have. So treated, the sections are dried in sawdust, and continue to live for ten days and still be good bait for fluke and whiting. I have never seen anything so horrible since I saw a man on Southend pier baiting with pieces of live crab. "Pity," says Wells, "is as much wasted on a crab or lobster as on a fluttering leaf." I wonder!

*Nov. 5* Motored to Windermere and decided that I am *Saturday*. like Wordsworth, who, according to Miss Mitford, expected his admirers to "admire *en masse*—all, every page, every line, every word, every comma; to admire nothing else, and to admire all day long."

*Nov. 6* Leo sat in the car for fifty miles without speaking, *Sunday*. and with the face of a soured, elderly tart. Then he broke silence: "You know, of course, James, that my maternal grandmother and Sarah Bernhardt's mother were sisters. What you don't know is that one of my aunts was a *grande amoureuse* in the eighteenth-century connota-

tion of that phrase. She died when she was nearly seventy, and left £69,000 to the ex-billiard-marker whom she had divorced and then re-married twenty years later ! ” I asked him what will happen to the Jews if and when neither Fascist nor Communist countries will harbour them, and the democratic countries do not easily tolerate them. Leo said, “ There has always been somewhere for us to go ; we have always been in the van of culture ; we have always had our behinds kicked. There will *always* be somewhere for us to go ; we shall *always* be in the van of culture ; and we shall *always* have our behinds kicked.” Later, in the lounge of a Birmingham hotel, I met a strictly Aryan magnate. We agreed about the absence of ventilation, the smallness of the writing-room, the exorbitant price of everything. He said he was Sir Biggles Wade, or some such name, and inquired mine. This meaning nothing to him, I added, “ Theatres.” He said, “ A long-haired fellah came into lunch just now. Looked like a fiddler. Who would that be ? ” I said, “ Probably Paganini.” He said, “ Damned interesting ! ” And I reflected that there will always be an English county for him to live in, that in the matter of world culture he will always be in the rear, and that he left Eton and Balliol in the tranquil consciousness that never again on this side of the grave would he have his behind kicked.

Nov. 7 Letter to a publisher asking me to contribute to *Monday*. a symposium on Irving :

*The Queen's Hotel*  
*Birmingham*  
*Nov. 7, '38*

MY DEAR MR CECIL PALMER,

*The Bells*—apart from the first act, which was heart-breaking—was a piffling melodrama. I would rather see the old man in it than any ten of to-day's youngsters in *OEdipus*, *Lear*, and the entire classic repertory. In my considered view great acting in this country died with Irving, and we haven't seen smell or hearing or feel or taste of it since. If our young playgoers saw Irving they would burst like electric-light bulbs. If you saw Irving you don't need to be told what he was like. If you didn't what's the good ? The age

has its Robert Taylors and Jessie Mathewses. Why tamper with fragrance? Why cloud the dewy present with immortal dust? It lives; we remember; and the young generation doesn't care.

Yours faithfully,

JAMES AGATE

Nov. 12 I arrive home last night and find a note telling Saturday. me that out of the 2000 copies which was *Ego* 3's initial printing 1648 have been sold. A second printing is therefore indicated, and will I make a list of any corrections immediately? Do so, and start to compose *S.T.* article at two in the morning, finishing around four. Jock types till six, sleeps an hour on the sofa, and is off to the country by seven.

Lunched, at Herbert Morgan's invitation, with M. Eugen Titeanu, the Rumanian Minister of Propaganda, and some twelve or fourteen Rumanian journalists. All charming, though I intensely dislike being addressed as "Maître." Titeanu is obviously a man of great brains, though not remarkable to look at. He made, in French, a witty, eloquent, and moving speech. Before the party broke up he took the trouble to come round to me and draw on the menu a map showing the European disposition of his nationals.

Nov. 13 To the Court Theatre for a revival of *All Quiet on Sunday. the Western Front.* Very much impressed. This was followed by a film of the Armistice ceremony. The audience was extraordinarily silent throughout both films.

Nov. 15 Complete, unexpurgated edition of the Greville *Tuesday. Memoirs* published to-day. It turns out that there was nothing to expurgate. The *Times* says, "In the intervals of winning or losing at Newmarket, attending dinner parties or enjoying fashionable love affairs, Greville gave way to dreadful bouts of remorse and depression, when he reflected that his life had been wasted and his talents squandered, or meditated on the hideous decline of youth and

energy. . . . In spite of the distractions of betting and visiting, in spite of the excitement of owning a horse that won the St Leger, he returned to his diary as to a wife or mistress."

*Nov. 16* Viola Tree, who has died, was an indifferent *Wednesday*. actress with a poor sense of timing. Too tall, and handicapped by a voice that came and went in gusts, she was on the stage for thirty years and still remained an amateur. This didn't prevent her from being one of the most gallant, brave, and amusing women I have ever known. She had as many loyalties as a box has matches. In a changing world she kept wittily abreast of the times, and steadily maintained an acute perception of right values. Superficially a waverer and even something of a clown, Viola, who could not be led or driven an inch from what she deemed to be right, had the sense to realise that to put the clowning or grotesque side of herself on the stage could be her one success. And so it turned out. Hers was a divided personality, which is perhaps what her husband, Alan Parsons, meant when he said, "Viola is either far too much awake, or far too much asleep!"

*Nov. 17* Lunched with James Heddle, who told me a story *Thursday*. about Carl Fallas, a cub-reporter on the *Manchester Daily Dispatch* when Jimmie was its editor and I was a contributor. Coming into the office one day, Fallas said, "How much can I get for a second-hand Bible and Shakespeare?" Jimmie asked why he wanted to sell, and Fallas said, "Because I've read them."

*Nov. 18* Arnold Gyde telling me at lunch that his firm, *Friday*. Heinemann's, are about to publish a life of Edgar Wallace, I said I would do all I could to help it along. Gyde said, "Edgar will light another cigarette in his grave, and thank you."

*Nov. 19* Sat up in bed this morning and between 10.30 *Saturday*. and 12 reeled off a column about last night's performance at the little Torch Theatre, Knights-

bridge, of Ibsen's *When We Dead Awaken*. On great occasions Jock and I always sit together, and we did this last night. The young actors worked like imprisoned miners, my brother-in-law, Wilfrid Grantham, pulling some wonderful faces. Translation good, except that "Sit here and talk a little" should have been "Sit here and talk a lot"!

Nov. 20 Sunday 'Pop.' at the Queen's Hall. A very fine *Sunday*. young pianist, Helmann, in Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3. This was the first time I had heard this in the flesh, and it confirmed the impression I got from Moiseiwitsch on the wireless and also from Horowitz's gramophone record that R. is only saying all over again what he said in No. 2. Benno and Mark Hambourg were both there, Mark saying, "The boy's playing is very fast, accurate, and elegant. When he plays something else we shall know whether it is musical."

Nov. 23 Dined in Albany with Clifford Bax, Meum *Wednesday*. Stewart, and another guest, one Denzil Batchelor, a very clever, fat young poet, who is C. B. Fry's Jock and one of the finest talkers I have ever met. But we all twinkled a bit. Clifford is ascending to higher and higher spheres. He made three separate allusions to his conversion to Buddhism. I think he fancies he is Buddha.

Nov. 24 I am made melancholy by the death of Peter *Thursday*. Ridgeway at the age of forty-four. He was the kind of actor who illustrates the strength of weakness. So too did *Charles and Mary*, the play about the Lambs in which he made his reputation. It is a minor miracle that the play ever came to be written, and when written, produced. But the thing happened. For once in a way the key fitted the lock, and this odd, shy little actor, who was reduced to playing stammerers because of ill-health and defective memory, came to personify that other little stammerer. The impersonation of Charles was a miracle of life-likeness, tenderness, and sensibility. Now Ridgeway ought

never, in this prosaic world, to have been an actor at all. First newsboy, then coffee-shop attendant, he asked and didn't take Matheson Lang's advice, joined an inferior touring company, failed, thought of becoming a monk, joined up in the War, helped at Toc H, studied for the priesthood, learned his job as an actor in Sybil Thorndike's company, started the Players' Theatre in Covent Garden, made and kept it gay, and in the heart of Lamb's own London *was* Charles Lamb. His unremarked career was a tiny edifice of which any stone might at any moment have given way. Yet poetic justice arranged that it had its tiny crown and was as complete as it ever could have been.

*Nov. 25* Luncheon party at the Garrick to Hamish Hamilton-Friday. ton, off to America. Actually it was H.H.'s party, given to see himself off. A wonderfully good host with a gift for blending guests. Clockwise: Hamish, Jock, Jimmie Horsnell, Cyril Lakin, Lord Moore, Arthur Bryant, Ivor Brown, J. B. Priestley, Harold Dearden, Frank Swinnerton, J.A., Eddie Marsh. Eddie told us of a magnificent rebuke to a late-comer at a luncheon party, the host being Lord Brougham and the guest a famous society leader arriving half an hour late and pleading she had been buying a chandelier. Lord B., looking straight ahead, said, "I once knew a man who bought a chandelier *after* luncheon."

*Nov. 26* E. A. Baughan, who died to-day at the age of *Saturday*. seventy-three, was a 'safer' critic even than Darlington, which is like suggesting a safer safe than Chubb's. Never spectacularly right, he was never wrong. His defect was over-modesty in print; you looked in vain next morning for the trenchant things he had said in the foyer the night before. Universally liked and respected.

*Nov. 28* Supped last night *chez* Clive Morton, the actor. *Monday*. His nimble-witted wife, Joan Harben, overheard this in Oxford Street last week:

MOTHER (*to small son*). You naughty boy! Whatever

made you do it to Grandma? In a shop, too, with everybody looking.

SMALL SON (*sullenly*). I 'ad to!

Lunched at Madelcine Cohen's. James Whale was there, full of stories about Mrs Pat. How she said to him, " You are a wonderful producer. Nobody else could have made me look like a little, old, bow-windowed chest of drawers! " And how she threw away thirty dollars on a telephone call from New York to Hollywood just to say, " I've had a cable from England. They want me to play Oscar Wilde. "

*Dec. 4* At the Cooling Galleries some little time ago I was *Sunday*. hesitating between two small pictures, and took the opinion of the only other visitor, who turned out to be Lord Sandwich. The result was an invitation to spend to-day at Hinchingbrooke. No other guests, a charming family, and some grand pictures, the modern ones including a lovely Conder, who seems to have been a painter of more than fans. Saw Lely's big Charles II, and when I got home turned up Pepys's *Diary* and found :

June 18, 1662. Mr Pett and I walked to Lilly's, the painter's, where we saw, among other rare things, the Duchess of York, in white sattin, and another of the King that is not finished; most rare things.

*Dec. 7* My boyhood's passion was cricket. (I still have *Wednesday*. a nightmare about playing for Lancashire and missing catch after catch in the long field.) A year or two ago I received a letter from K. J. Key, the Surrey crack of those days. I wrote in reply that if he had sent me that or any letter fifty years ago I should have dropped dead with ecstasy.

I told this to C. B. Fry, when I met him to-night at dinner at Clifford Bax's. Clifford wanted to talk about fifteenth-century Italy, Fry about the theatre, and I about cricket. *We talked about cricket.* Fry, alluding to man's universal desire to shine at something else, said : " I always wanted

to be a minor poet. I remember when I did my record long jump saying to myself when I was in the air half-way, 'This may be pretty good jumping. It's dashed poor minor poetry ! ''

It was an exciting evening. To the great danger of some priceless bric-à-brac the man who had been among the six best batsmen of his time illustrated some of the strokes of the old masters, and some modern failings. Pressed as to the world's greatest batsman, he declined to compare Grace, the giant English yeoman wielding a battleaxe, with Ranjit-sinhji, the princely master of the foil. But he definitely thought Ranji the harder to get out, and in his mind the un-spoken order seemed to be Ranji, Grace, Trumper, Bradman, Hobbs. He also said that the secret of Jessop's marvellous quickness lay in the fact that he was double-jointed all over. About the mentality of all cricketers : " If they were mice you wouldn't be able to teach them the way to their holes ! " When I asked what bowler he had been most afraid of he replied, " Lockwood, of Surrey. He was a fast bowler with the flight of a slow one. No other man could ever deceive me with the same ball twice running. When Lockwood got me out I felt that, if I had the stroke all over again, the result must be the same ! "

Fry also told us this extraordinary thing : On the day E. V. Lucas died Lady W——, who was lunching at Lord's, pointed to the door and said, " Look, there's E.V. going out ! " Everybody looked, and there was nobody. She said afterwards that she saw E.V. quite clearly, and that he got smaller and smaller.

Dec. 8      At the little Etoile Restaurant in Charlotte Thursday. Street to-day met Tommy Earp, who recited this poem which he had just written :

#### LAMENT FOR LORCA

Only the other day there was a poet in Spain  
Whose poems were known from Vigo to Majorca,  
For he was a Spanish poet, and his name was Lorca,  
But he will not sing again.

When Granada fell to Franco and, they said, to God,  
 Murder ran in the street, and hate without reason,  
 To be a poet and to love Spain was treason,  
 Fruit for the firing-squad.

Better than those who shot him Lorca knew  
 The hearts of those who shot him, who were tipsy,  
 For his friends were peasant, bull-fighter, and gipsy,  
 And the Spain from which they grew.

Till men know their own hearts, and know their crimes,  
 There will be but death on the plains and on the mountains,  
 There will be no more singing by the fountains,  
 No end to these black times.

Dec. 9 Letter from Earp :  
 Friday.

32 Fitzroy Street, W.1  
 December 8th, 1938

DEAR JAMES,

I return home rather compuflled after an evening with those two old professional gipsies John and Zuloaga to find your telegram. I ought not to have imposed my poem on you at the Etoile, but was a bit wound up about Lorca. The *Lament* is faulty from the polite point of view because 'know' in verses 1 and 4 is too repeated, and 'their' plus 'there' in verse 4. But the thing is supposed to be bardic and loose.

I wish you could find me a paper, whether *Feathered Weekly* or *Squash Rackets Gazette*, which would take a bit of verse, perhaps twenty lines, in the style of Béranger or Kipling, at £5 a week for three years. People might like a little rhythm and rhyme rather more serious than the Western Bros., and it would be nicer to write than art criticism.

Yours,  
 TOMMY

Dec. 10 Oscar Wilde's great friend, Reggie Turner, who Saturday. has died abroad, was a wit, though few of his sayings have survived. Leo Pavia remembers a party throughout which two young men near the door sat mum, twiddling their caps. When they got up to go Turner said, "I suppose when you two cherubs are alone neither of you can get a silence in edgeways."



Photo A. C. Cooper and Sons, Ltd.

## *The Author and Glock*



Dec. 12 Jock in the middle of work yesterday morning : Monday. "Are you aware, man, that your costume's composed of a nightshirt, a pullover, a jacket, no trousers, and an auld dressing-gown. You haven't shaved yoursel', and your twa-three hairs are stickin' round your head like a hedgehog ! "

This morning I made Jock's hair stick up by arranging for Mr Cooper, the excellent photographer of Rose and Crown Yard, to break in upon our morning sitting and give permanence to his fleeting diatribe.

Dec. 13 Brother Edward scalps *Ego* 3 :  
Tuesday.

12 Huron Road, S.W.17  
Dec. 12, '38

MY DEAR JAMES,

I find, in your *Ego* 3, the same eminent quality of readability, the same remarkable zest for life, and the same vulgarity which characterized the two earlier volumes. Where you have improved, however, is in the exploitation of a keener mordancy of wit ; and a promise that, perhaps, some day, your mind will grow up. There is, as usual, far too much about food, drink, and the prices thereof ; which narration, though it may tickle the palates of the rich, is apt to get up the noses of the poor.

And your friends ! And your bedlamite behaviour ! These peregrinations into inaccessible spots by motor-car, at dead of night ; this invention of parlour-games ; this flirting with phobias. You and your friends remind me of a disused pack of cards—all knaves and jokers ; and their proceedings take me back to *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, with a touch of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* thrown in.

Still, as I saw that Lyons' awarded you their weekly cake, I suppose it's all right.

Now, shall we examine the work a little more closely ?

P. 20. "From whence." If Mr Cardus had pleaded a precedent in Psalm 121 I suppose C. P. Scott would have retorted, "King David would not have used it twice in my Bible."

P. 50. A most excellent photo of you. More lord than Lonsdale !

But what happened to your teeth on p. 244? Did they move? And Dame Marie looks exactly like Puss about to sneeze.

P. 83. You think you would like a little of Lord Alfred Douglas quite a lot. Is it possible his lordship would like a lot of J.A. quite a little?

P. 87. Don't bother your head about Metaphysics! They are for the super-brains of the world, not the supper-brains.

P. 163. What a get-up! Combination of commissionnaire and gymnasium-instructor. Where did you think you were bound for? Eel-Pie Island?

EDWARD

*Dec. 14* Jock tells me of a discussion he had in Covent *Wednesday*. Garden with McNaught, the musical critic, on the subject of the difficulty or non-difficulty of Weber's *Concertstück* in F minor. "Agate," said Jock, "told me this morning that it was so easy that he could play it himself!" To which McNaught replied, "Which Agate—*Edward, or the other one?*" I told Jock that this confirmed a suspicion I have long entertained—that in three hundred years' time somebody will re-discover the *Ego* books, pick out Brother Edward's contributions, and discard the rest. Jock said, "I have't in my nose too!"

*Dec. 15* Two more of my *Nouveaux Contes Séabreux*. *Thursday*. All I can say about No. 2 is that the hero is a boastful fellow called Onanias. No. 3 is about an actress so much in love with her understudy that on the first night of the new play she feigns illness!

*Dec. 17* Before going down to correct my proofs at the *Saturday*. S.T. squeezed in a performance of the *Messiah*. Or, rather, Beecham squeeze it in for me. I thought he over-Mozartified it. The soloists were not a patch on the singers of my youth—Albani, with a bosom like the prow of a battleship; Ada Crossley, an obvious victim to the inferiority complex common to contraltos; Edward Lloyd, with his waxed moustache and what I always took to be a wig;

and that tottering old lion Santley, with the roar reduced to a bark and only the style left.

*Dec. 20* Supper party at Villa Volpone. A. E. W. Mason, *Tuesday.* Monty Shearman, Moiseiwitsch and his wife, Helen Haye, Violet Vanbrugh, Mary Hutchinson, Lord Sandwich. Very gay.

*Dec. 21* At Eiluned Hendrey's Christmas lunch to-day *Wednesday.* met Max Beerbohm for the first time, and had all my illusions magnified. Asked why he cartooned no more, he said, "One should be impertinent only to one's elders, and I have none!" Jock was there too, and we have agreed that to put any of the talk on to paper would be to spoil it. It was a perfect couple of hours, with the principal guest as chattersome when launched as he was chary of being launched. But perhaps the last convolution in the complicated art of good conversation is for the best talker to suggest that he is being drawn out.

*Dec. 23* Galt has sent me a dozen of his early paintings with *Friday.* instructions to keep, sell, or destroy. A wee bit disappointed, not with their immaturity, but with their lack of immature ferocity. Baddish, but not arrogantly bad. Sold one for £10. Then this extraordinary thing happened. A lady wrote to say that she admired the Galt picture in *Ego 3*, had always lived with reproductions, and never owned a real picture. Did I think Galt would let her have a small canvas for £10? I invited her to tea, and sold her a *Child's Head* for £8, which she produced. After which she wrapped up the picture and carried it away.

*Christmas Day.* Lunched at Moiseiwitsch's, and dined at Monty Shearman's.

*Boxing Day.* Pub-crawled.

*Bank Holiday.* Ditto.

Dec. 28 No. 4 in my *Nouveaux Contes Scabreux*. The Wednesday. last minutes of a dipsomaniac who, on hearing his own death-rattle, orders the watchers by the bedside to send that damned snake away.

Dec. 29 Ego 3 has now sold 2212 copies.

Thursday.

Dec. 30 At this time of year I always find myself taking up *Friday*. Balzac. I sat late last night re-reading *Splendeurs et Misères*, and, as always, enormously struck by the scene in which the Baron Nucingen pays court to Esther Gobseck. "Aime-t-on d'amour une femme qu'on achète?" the poor girl asks, and receives the astonishing reply: "Choseffe ha pien édé fenti bar ses vrères à gausse de sa chantillesse. C'esde tans la Piple. T'ailleirs, tans l'Oriende, on agéde ses phâmmes lèchidimes." After which comes this:

Arrivée rue Taitbout, Esther ne put revoir sans des impressions dououreuses le théâtre de son bonheur. Elle resta sur un divan, immobile, étanchant ses larmes une à une, sans entendre un mot des folies que lui baragouinait le banquier. Il se mit à ses genoux ; elle l'y laissa sans lui rien dire, lui abandonnant ses mains quand il les prenait, mais ignorant, pour ainsi dire, de quel sexe était la créature qui lui réchauffait les pieds, que Nucingen trouva froids. Cette scène de larmes brûlantes semées sur la tête du baron et de pieds à la glace réchauffés par lui dura de minuit à deux heures du matin.

This suggests a *Conte Scabreux* entitled *Incident at Villa Volpone*. But in some future volume, because I am only sixty-one, and Nucingen was sixty-six !

For years I have been trying to find the right place in which to say something wildly counter to received opinion. This is that after middle age only impermissible couplings are allowable. Elderly fribble and chorus-girl, matron and gigolo—these *liaisons* are not wholly disgusting, since youth has some part in them, even if it is compensated youth. But that a man in his sober sixties should contemplate relationship with the bouncing fifties revolts me.

Dec. 31 The year's work:

*Saturday.*

|                                |         |       |
|--------------------------------|---------|-------|
| <i>Sunday Times</i>            | 100,000 | words |
| <i>Daily Express</i> Reviews   | 80,000  | „     |
| <i>Daily Express</i> Notes     | 25,000  | „     |
| <i>Tatler</i>                  | 60,000  | „     |
| <i>New York Herald-Tribune</i> | 10,000  | „     |
| Pseudonym                      | 85,000  | „     |
| <i>Ego</i> 3                   | 30,000  | „     |
| <i>Ego</i> 4                   | 30,000  | „     |
| Odd articles                   | 28,000  | „     |
|                                | <hr/>   |       |
|                                | 448,000 | „     |

The totals for previous years have been:

|      |         |       |
|------|---------|-------|
| 1935 | 555,000 | words |
| 1936 | 505,000 | „     |
| 1937 | 508,000 | „     |

I am dismayed at the falling off. However, since I made more money in 1938 than in any previous year—between five and six thousand pounds—I suppose it's all right!



## I 939

*Jan. 1* “I suppose it’s all right.” Is it hell! When I got *Sunday*. in last night I found a note from the income-tax people demanding immediate payment of current tax and arrears to the tune of £1841 4s., also a bill for horse-keep for £292. I think my boast on p. 268 of *Ego 3* must refer to petty tradesmen only. Let’s face it. *I could not pay all I owe if called on to-morrow morning*. A strict balance-sheet which included money-lenders and bank loan would, I calculate, show me as some £4000 on the wrong side. I’ve got assets, of course, such as insurance policies which I don’t want to surrender. And you cannot call horses liquid!

From my car I saw six Japanese-minded swans in flight over the lake in Regent’s Park.

*Jan. 2* Brother Edward starts the New Year with a p.c.  
*Monday*. From a local newsagent’s window :  
“Nice unfurnished Bed-sitting room to be let for Gentleman newly decorated.”  
(Oh, these New Year Honours!)

*Jan. 3* Fred Leigh having retired himself to the post of *Tuesday*. Grand Chamberlain (paid) and Adviser-in-Chief (unpaid), I have engaged a new valet, one Robert Stott, who figures in one of those pathetico-absurd incidents which I find irresistible. Having been in communication with Downing Street on some purely formal matter, I receive a letter with “Prime Minister” stamped on the envelope. The boy, who comes from Durham, asks me if he can have the envelope. “Why?” “To send home to prove that I’m in a respectable job!” Have also taken on a new chauffeur, one George Wickens, whose mind seems to be entirely centred in

the car. This is as it should be. New brooms sweep clean. This pair looks like sweeping me out of the house.

*Jan. 5* That unspoiled child Alfred Douglas sends me a *Thursday* cutting from a letter written by a "leading critic":

I thought your review of Jimmie Agate's book admirable, if a thought too magnanimous. He's an odd mixture of culture and bumptious ignorance, don't you think?

*Jan. 6* Lunched at Charlie Openshaw's, sitting on a chair *Friday*. with a brass plate inscribed:

Charles Dickens  
Gadshill. June, 1870

Openshaw was trustee and executor for the late Ethel Dickens, granddaughter of the novelist. She was a retiring little lady who used to type Barrie's plays, and so much hated trading on her grandfather's fame that when in my early days she honoured me by doing a little typing I did not discover the relationship for more than a year. She was not only the nicest but the closest human being I ever dealt with. One day she let out the fact that Barrie's new play was to be in four acts, and her remorse at this breach of confidence lasted a month. Ethel was of the old school. Her typewriter, which she used to bring with her, was so antiquated that it took the taxi-driver and Fred Webster, my bâtman, all their time to get it into the house. Ethel would play on it with old-world grace, and I soon found that it was a machine which declined to take down any sentiment less than noble. When she knew me to be in funds she would eat a midday cutlet; when she saw bills about she would take nothing but a cup of tea.

*Jan. 7* Literary criticism as it is written to-day:  
*Saturday*.

That tough bit of meat they call Flora MacD. may well have suited the palate of B. Prince Charlie; but for my part

I prefer women to be a degree more tender, a trifle more like sweetbreads and less like mutton chops.

PATRICK BALFOUR, *in the "Evening Standard"*

Jan. 8 Took Jock yesterday to the Albert Hall for the *Sunday. Messiah*, which he had never heard. Sat in a box with a lot of tea-munchers. In the middle of "Thou shalt break them" a girl came in for the tea-things, which I threatened to dash in pieces like the potter's vessel. She fled shrieking. The things which struck me most yesterday were the *ritornello* in "O thou that tellest," the dark backward and abysm of "For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth," the Gerontius-like quality of "But there was no man," the police-court certainty of "I know that my Redeemer liveth," and the pure gaiety of "Thou didst not leave."

Jan. 9 Yesterday I baited my *Sunday Times* column Monday. exquisitely, and this morning found that I had hooked, of all people, Brother Edward. Looking up Webster to find out whether the word 'immorigerous' was *obs.* or *arch.*, my eye caught a line of bosh by somebody I had never heard of. I therefore ended the *S.T.* article, which was about the Holborn Empire, with the words: "The performance of the Diamond Brothers recalls a phrase so obviously on the tip of every reader's tongue that I hesitate to quote it—Cudworth's 'chaos of immiscible and conflicting particles'!" And waited! Among my letters this morning I found this:

How dare you read Ralph Cudworth! Don't you know that I am the only person in England permitted to peruse unreadable books? I confess that his theory of plastic nature and his "drowsy unawakened cogitation" is a trifle hard to understand, but what a storehouse of ancient philosophy the work is, and what immense erudition it displays! There is an exposition of the book in Hallam, and Isaac Disraeli has an article on Cudworth. It is to be found—*The Intellectual System of the Universe*, I mean—in the magnificent reference library at Brighton, of all places, where I read it.

Ever yours,  
EDWARD

*Jan. 10* Everybody is talking about Harry Ainley's return *Tuesday*. to the microphone as Jean Valjean in *Les Misérables*. He was in admirable voice on Sunday, they say. My sister May has often made me laugh at something which happened at Leeds during the tour of *Prince Fazil*. Harry, who is fond of his joke, said to May, who was playing the duenna: "One night, Miss Agate, in the scene in which you warn my wife against me, I shall not come on when you say, 'And besides . . .' I shall wait in the wings and see how you fill in!" Nothing happened until Friday. "And besides . . ." said May. No Harry. May tapped her forehead. Harry stood grinning in the wings. "I've got it!" said May. "I've remembered what I was going to say. I have to warn you that your husband is very fond of amateur theatricals. *And he's a very bad actor!*" On bounded *Prince Fazil*, and never again was May allowed to get as far as "And besides . . .!"

Listened in on North Regional to Louis Kentner playing Scriabin's F sharp minor piano concerto. A fine piece full of a brilliant, lush emotionalism.

*Jan. 11* Brother Edward again :  
*Wednesday.*

From a Funeral Furnisher in North London: "Our Hearses are always on your Doorstep."

(*L'Ecole des Morts*, No. 2)

*Jan. 12* As I sat watching the film of *The Mikado* at the *Thursday*. Leicester Square Theatre to-night I could not help wondering what the authors would have made of it. I can imagine that the venture might have obtained the consent of Sullivan with his generous mind and large discourse, looking before and after in the matter of millions who would not otherwise know his tunes. Gilbert, no! For Gilbert was the soul of punctilio, and the soul of punctilio is meanness. Therefore had the pair been alive to-day we may be sure that the opera would not have been filmed.



*Photo Alfred Furness*

*Mark Hambourg*



Jan. 13 I have no notion what I am going to rig up for my *Friday. S.T.* article this week. There has been no new play since Christmas, and I can't write more than four Reviews of the Year! The worst of it is that a dramatic critic is allowed nothing to fall back upon. The essayist at large has the wide world to roam about in. There is a column, *for an essayist*, in that engraving which hangs in my bedroom of Edmund Kean as Richard Crookback with the letterpress:

Act V: *Scene Last*

Perdition catch thy Arm—the chance is thine.  
 But Oh! the vast Renown thou hast acquired  
 In conquering Richard does afflict him more  
 Than even his Body's parting with its Soul.  
 Now let the World no longer be a Stage  
 To feed contention in a lingering Act,  
 But let one Spirit of the first-born Cain  
 Reign in all Bosoms; that each Heart being set  
 On bloody courses, the rude Scene may end  
 And darkness be the burier of the dead.  
 (Dies)

The last six lines are from *Henry IV*, Part 2. The first four I suspect to be Cibber. Cibber was a scoundrel, but he had a sense of the stage. I never think it quite satisfactory that Shakespeare should leave Richard to die without a word.

Jan. 14 In a sober mood to-night, the result of seeing an *Saturday* instructional film about the genesis of the moth, listening to Mark, Jan, and Charles Hambourg playing Beethoven's Piano Trio No. 2, in G major, and reading an article in *Picture Post* suggesting that there isn't, never has been, and never will be Life in the universe except on this planet.

I distrust the amateur in everything, but in nothing more than in metaphysics. On the other hand, there are some things which every man must square up to for himself, and what is going to happen to him after death is the first of these. It's no use telling me that the part cannot have cognition of the whole of which it is a part. Even so, this is no excuse for sitting back and twiddling one's metaphysical thumbs. Let me

set down my position. Either there is what Man calls purpose in the universe, or there isn't. Either the Power that created oxygen and hydrogen foresaw water or it didn't. If it didn't, then I am prepared to believe that Man was an accident. If it did, then not. Now to believe that Man is subtler than the Power which created him would make me despair if I had not hit on a remedy. The sublimity of the Forlorn Hope is generally recognised. Then why not the Grandeur of the Forlorn Achievement? The *Eroica* was worth Beethoven's while even if music itself is ultimately to perish. Therefore Beauty is good enough even if it is only a property of the human mind, and when that mind dies *has never been*. The bet comes home whether the horse wins or loses.

All this is, of course, based on three-dimensional reasoning, and on the assumption that mind and matter are as much strangers as chalk and cheese, and that time and space would not know one another if they met. But long before I ever heard of Einstein I not only suspected the falsity of three-dimensional assumptions, but scouted the notion of a three-dimensional universe. I believe in a fourth dimension in which we shall find "Nothing can come of nothing" changed to "Nothing can come to nothing. Whatever has been, is." In the meantime the universe may, if it likes, go on being a three-dimensional 'sell.' I am convinced that if it is three-dimensional it must be a sell. I shall stick to my Forlorn Achievement.

Jan. 16 Eddie Marsh has bought Galt's early *Sleeping Monday*. *Hunchback* for £10. Last night I sold a *Child's Head*—the smaller of two—to Tom Driberg after tossing up whether he should give six pounds or five. Galt lost. I didn't look at the cheque till this morning, and found that it was made out for £5 10s. Charming gesture, which has put me in a fever, whereby I deposit £5 of my own, and two pictures which I ought never to have bought, with the Zwemmer Galleries against the purchase of a Dufy. Water-colour. The Paddock at Ascot. £85. This is irresistible, income tax or no income tax !

*Jan. 19* Can nothing be done about these ridiculous first-*Thursday*.

night scenes after the fall of the curtain ? At the Shaftesbury to-night, after a tepid thriller, there appeared from nowhere a tall, thin gentleman, followed by a short, round gentleman, followed by a large, beaming gentleman who proceeded to kiss everybody's hand. None of these had been called for by the audience, which had not the vaguest notion who any of them was. The result of all this fuss is the elaborate destruction of whatever has been achieved. How tolerate a stammering mooncalf whose trousers are as much too short as his acts have been too long ? Why must Joan descend from her pyre to tell us that our reception has made her feel hot all over ?

I think perhaps I should allow playwrights to *apologise*, and here is a speech which might serve as model :

Ladies and Gentlemen : Whilst thanking you for the magnificent reception you have given my play, I can only express astonishment that you should not have hissed it. Had you the brains to perceive it, you would know that my piece is impudently bad from start to finish ; indeed, I have never known a more talentless piece of hack-work offered to an uncritical public. It is only because managers realise your lack of critical faculty that this worthless rubbish has been placed before you, in the belief that your colossal ignorance and obscene stupidity will make it the usual phenomenal success. Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the company, I thank you.

*Jan. 20* Musical criticism as it is written to-day :

*Friday.*

The gentleman in Strauss's *Death and Transfiguration* was like Charles I [sic] in that he took an unconscionable time a-dying. Not even Bruno Walter's transfiguring genius last night could remove the odour of corruption from this nasty necrophilous music.

S. F., in the " *Daily Herald* "

*Jan. 21* The remodelled *Paprika*, now called *Magyar Melody*, began again last night. *Plus ça change...* I cannot conceive what Offenbach, Meilhac and

Halévy, Hortense Schneider, and the old Bouffes Parisiens would have made of this modern witlessness. The best of the show was less good than third-rate Coward, and I yawned so much that my spectacles fell into the lap of a lady sitting in the stall behind me.

*Jan. 27* "Amid the mortifying circumstances attendant *Friday*. upon growing old," wrote Lamb, "it is something to have seen the *School for Scandal* in its glory." Similarly I shall say that it is something to have beheld *The Playboy of the Western World* at its creation. When I saw Maire O'Neill play Pegeen for the first time I believed in Helen of Troy for the first time. But that is thirty years ago, and to-night, at the revival at the little Mercury Theatre, it was the Widow Quin that Molly played.

And flowers distill'd, though they with winter meet,  
Lose but their show; their substance still lives sweet.

When, at the end, Molly came forward and spoke I thought of George Mair, her first husband, and the times we had in Manchester, and how our youth and the dawn of the Irish theatre seemed to go together.

*Feb. 11* Alfred Sheppard, a historical novelist and charming *Saturday*. old gentleman, said to me to-night, "I suppose you're leaving part of *Ego* in cypher to be decoded in a hundred years. That will put you on the map even if you have shown signs of not being immortal."

*Feb. 13* Looking into Wyndham Albery's *Life and Works* *Monday*. of James Albery, I find this :

On the 20th November, 1880, an adaptation by Albery of *Sodom and Gomorrah*, by Herr von Schönthan, was produced at the Criterion Theatre with Charles Wyndham, H. Beerbohm Tree, George Siddons, Mrs John Wood, Miss Rose Saker, Miss Mary Rorke, and Miss Eastlake, under the title of *Where's the Cat?*

Feb. 18 Arnold Bennett tells how he held the hand of his *Saturday* dying mother under the bedclothes and noted the numbers on the corners of the blankets. And how, at the funeral, the undertaker's men hung their hats on the spikes of the hearse. In the yard of the crematorium at Clare Greet's funeral to-day I heard a jolly, Sam Wellerish fellow arranging to have a drink "after the next lot." Two minutes later he was giving the responses and twiddling the roller-keys with perfectly assumed reverence. Clare had more natural pathos than any actress I ever saw; Courtenay Thorpe, who first took me to supper at her house, always said she was exceeded in emotional power only by the American actress Clara Morris. Her Mrs Ballard in McEvoy's play, Mrs Borridge in *The Cassilis Engagement*, Mrs Clegg in *Jane Clegg*, Mrs Midget in *Outward Bound*, and the mother in *Time to Wake Up* were all shattering performances. Her line was good-natured, querulous old women of the lower middle-classes with a soft spot that became an all-engulfing quicksand. She would have been the perfect Mrs Clappins, and her Mistress Quickly was never approached in my time. Clare had much greater strength of character than her stage impersonations suggested. She had a crab-apple quality, and was generous without being a fool. It was a rule with us never to meet, in theatre, restaurant, or street, without a good old-fashioned hug.

Feb. 21 Eleven o'clock last night found me alone in a *Tuesday* strange flat in Marylebone playing early Beethoven sonatas, very badly, on a magnificent Bechstein, and with a bottle of champagne at my elbow! I had met Alfred Chenhalls and his wife at the L.S.O. Concert at the Queen's Hall, and they had asked me in on their way to a party to which they went after making me comfortable. A.C. is a tall, elegant man with a baldish, slightly egg-shaped head—a Micawber for whom things turn up. He is an accountant, and out of the goodness of his heart wants to put my affairs in order for me.

In the meantime here is the financial result of *Ego 3*:

|         |      | £                        |
|---------|------|--------------------------|
| Advance | £250 | Agent's commission       |
|         |      | 25                       |
|         |      | Typing                   |
|         |      | 20                       |
|         |      | Indexing                 |
|         |      | 7                        |
|         |      | Excess proof corrections |
|         |      | 18                       |
|         |      | Presentation copies      |
|         |      | 24                       |
|         |      | Tax                      |
|         |      | 53                       |
|         |      | Profit                   |
|         |      | 103                      |
|         | —    | —                        |
|         | £250 | £250                     |
|         | —    | —                        |

From which I conclude that Mrs Micawber's view about corn applies equally to the writing of autobiographies: "It may be gentlemanly, but it is not remunerative."

*Feb. 26* Charles Morgan having praised Priestley for aiming *Sunday*. at the skies in *Johnson over Jordan* instead of at some earth-bound mark, I counter in the *S.T.* with a pastiche of Browning:

EPITAPH ON AN ARCHER AIMING HIGH BUT WIDE  
You say his aim was noble; here's my hand.  
That arrow's gold which scorns to hit the target;  
All Golden Arrow trippers understand  
'Tis better to miss Naples than hit Margate.

*Feb. 27* Sudden jib from work. In the old days Jock and *Monday*. I used to have time for an occasional concert made out of gramophone records. For months past we have been so bullied and harassed and worried for articles that not a note has been heard. So to-day we struck, giving the house-boy orders to tell anybody who rang up to go to hell. After which we listened to the following carefully composed programme:

|   |                    |                |
|---|--------------------|----------------|
| 1. Overture.                                      | <i>Donna Diana</i> | Reznicek       |
| 2. "Wanderer" Fantasia for piano and<br>orchestra |                    | Schubert-Liszt |
| 3. Overture.                                      | <i>The Corsair</i> | Berlioz        |
| 4. Piano Solo                                     | Ballade in F minor | Chopin         |
| 5. Two Dances from <i>The Threc-cornered Hat</i>  |                    | de Falla       |

And then resumed work, the 'phone having rung fourteen times.

*Feb. 28* "Il était à craindre que *Le Misanthrope* n'ennuyât *Tuesday*. quelque peu son monde," wrote Sarcey of the piece chosen to usher in the visit to London of the Comédie Française in 1879. It was to be feared that Musset's *Le Chandelier* might bore some of the audience at last night's opening performance. It bored me. Stiff. I whispered to Jock, who was all *extasié*, that the generic name for Musset's weeping-willow heroes is Dick Sniveller. Afterwards to supper at the French Embassy, where everything was grand and gay.

*March 2* To speak French in Paris at midnight is easier *Thursday*. than speaking it in London at midday. I was a little nervous, therefore, at the official luncheon given to the players of the Comédie Française by the Anglo-French Art and Travel Society when I found myself seated between Mme Bourdet, the wife of the director, and Mlle Madeleine Renaud, the leading actress. I think I got through all right, thanks to Mlle Renaud's hat, an enchanting affair which, I told her, reminded me of the month of March saying in Gautier's poem, "Printemps, tu peux venir!" Mme Bourdet asked whether witty impromptus come naturally to English dramatic critics, or have to be painfully worked up. And I was immensely pleased with my counter from Molière: "Les gens de qualité savent tout sans avoir jamais rien appris."

*March 4* The *Times* prints a wonderful description of *Saturday*. Sarah Bernhardt in 1879, on the occasion of the visit of the Comédie Française in that year. It was found by a Mr L. E. Jones in manuscript, stuck into a copy of *Phèdre*.

On Saturday, July 5, Sarah Bernhardt acted *Phèdre*. Mdme Bernhardt is somewhat tall, and excessively thin. Her eyes are dark, her nose beautiful—small, almost straight, with the slightest possible suggestion of aquiline bend—the mouth rather large, and more expressive even than the

eyes. A marvellous mouth, conveying the expression of the strongest feelings with such extraordinary power and precision—especially sorrow, anger, horror, self-reproach—that it is the central *point d'appui* of the face. Her complexion is deadly pale, and a bush of hair crowns the forehead.

But her figure! It is not body, it is soul, nerve, sinew, fire. Her long white skeleton arms are like two beings in themselves. So instinct are they with strained expression of the most violent emotions, so various, so exquisite, in their lovely gestures of despair, or longing, of agonized baffled wishes, or passionate love, or helpless woe. These are also expressed in intensity by the whole figure, which is perfectly flat and with square shoulders, but which falls—the result of severe study—into attitudes, when standing or sitting, of unsurpassable grace. Her physique is the antipodes of the sensuous or sensual. No colour, no roundness, no curves, no soft, swansdown flesh—but adapted to shew forth, with a sort of spiritual fiery force, the strongest and most harrowing human passions.

Her voice is exceedingly rich, penetrating, and thrilling, and her pronunciation clear and incisive.

She was attired in long, heavy white robes falling close around her, a gold circlet on her head, a stream of brown hair in front of her right shoulder, and a transparent veil enveloping her from head to foot, all but the lovely bare arms and face. When she advanced alone to the footlights—in the speech in which she acknowledges and laments her unhappy love—her voice was startlingly piercing, low in pitch, but rather loud, as she slowly said, every syllable ringing:

Ce n'est plus une ardeur dans mes veines cachée,  
C'est Vénus tout entière à sa proie attachée.

Deep silence. No one could clap; we could only pant and clench our hands. The slow, emphatic declamation, the small white muscular face, were too impressive—the tragedy appeared too awful a reality.

March 5 Lay in bed reading a play in MS. (As it was a Sunday. friend's play I couldn't refuse.) Plot. A mentally deranged wife murders her epileptic husband because as a girl she was not allowed to sleep with her

father. Sub-plot. She also kills, because he threatens to expose her, a former suitor who was her husband's boy-friend. George Mathew, when I recounted this to him, said, "At which theatre is it proposed to produce this bagatelle?"

*March 6* Letter from Clifford Bax protesting against Jock's *Monday*. and my treatment of Priestley's *Johnson over Jordan*. After forbidding us to darken his door again unless we read the Upanishads for three hours a day C.B. goes on :

Good God, man ! Here you have a play which is doing the original job of the drama : to initiate the ignorant into the mysteries of religion. You have been shown what you will some day have to struggle through. (And you have admitted in *Ego 3* that I know all about the next world.) You go to a grand play, which is, like the plays of Athens, also a warning to the soul and an adumbration of *Things to Come*, and—well, what did you say about it? Just prattle of Expressionism ! You are a disgrace to the tribe of *Dritics*. I expect perception from you. I expect even more, perhaps, from Jock. But horror was piled upon horror when I found that he too had not realised that he had seen something much finer than any mere play.

And the letter ends with calling us both "a couple of mere pooh-poohers." I immediately despatched this :

*Villa Volpone*  
10 Fairfax Road, N.W.6  
6th March, 1939

DEAR CLIFFORD,

Letters from you are ever welcome, even nonsensical ones. Apart from the matter of presentation, which I think is silly, what does Priestley say in this piece which is new? I challenge you to tell me one single thought about death which you and I have not had a thousand times. I do not go to the theatre to witness the familiar fatuously formulated.

But I know why you like this play. Just as Drinkwater believed himself to be the reincarnation of Byron, so you fancy yourself as a second Buddha !

Yours offensively,

*March 8* A letter from Ireland has this about Amanda *Wednesday*. Ros :

Amanda's husband was a very popular fellow, and on his death a large quantity of floral tributes were sent to the house, and a big crowd turned up to attend his funeral. It is customary in Ireland for those attending a funeral to walk behind the hearse even if the place of burial is a couple of miles away. The cortège proceeds at a walking pace, and it is only the aged or infirm who ride in carriages. However, Amanda had other ideas. She had squared the hearse-driver on a signal from her to jerk his horses into a canter and gallop to the cemetery. When the coffin was put into the hearse, and the mourners were getting into walking formation, Amanda at an upstairs window gave the arranged signal, and the hearse went off at the trot, leaving the would-be mourners standing. To crown the matter, all the wreaths were returned to the donors the same evening. I think she engaged a man with a hand-barrow for the purpose. I may add that on the day of the funeral Amanda was dressed all in white, something like a bridal rig-out.

*March 9* Cheltenham Races. Backed six losers. A *con-Thursday*. trast to yesterday, when George, the chauffeur, investing 7s. 6d. for me with his street bookie, turned it into £4 0s. 5d. He had doubled up five animals with a horse called Litigant, and three of them won, as, of course, did Litigant also. It is an exciting thing to sit in a car, turn on the wireless, and hear a double come home. This, surely, is where television is going to come in. Being thoroughly greedy, I reflected that if George's stakes had been one of ten shillings instead of sixpence I should have made £80.

*March 10* The man Chenhalls is really extraordinary. When *Friday*. he offered to get me out of my present mess I denied that it was possible, saying that all my resources were mortgaged up to the hilt. He laughed, and said, "My dear fellow, you don't know where the hilt is!"

*March 11* Rachmaninoff recital at the Queen's Hall. The *Saturday*. last word in piano-playing. The programme announced four Chopin studies, but I was conscious

of a fifth—the expression on Moiseiwitsch's face! R. was the principal guest at the Savage Club dinner to-night, Benno presiding. As I was sitting in the angle of the T-table, within four feet of the chair, I had plenty of opportunity to study in Rachmaninoff that visual magnificence which comes naturally to great men like Irving and Chaliapin, to whose type this major artist belongs. It is an extraordinary mask, at once gentle and *farouche*, noble, melancholy, and sardonic. The result is composite—majestic indifference oddly united to the questing look of a French actor strolling the boulevards. When the lean figure rose to leave, everybody in the room stood up. Apart from royalty, this has happened before at the Savage only in the cases of Irving and Lord Roberts.

*March 12* Took the chair at the Annual Dinner of the Critics' Sunday. Circle. Not nervous, and my speech as good as any I have ever made. The guests were Tyrone Guthrie, Charles Laughton, Geoffrey Toye, Fay Compton, and Michael Redgrave. To the club for bridge afterwards, where Benno and my godson, Tony Baerlein, gave a good drubbing to George Bishop and me.

*March 13* Reading Mrs Charles Calvert's *Sixty-eight Years on the Stage*, I came across a passage which is as true to-day as it was in 1866. She is relating how her husband, after three years of producing and playing in Shakespeare at the Prince's Theatre, Manchester, decided not to renew his engagement: "I fancy that some of the directors were rather glad. They saw a chance of carrying on the Theatre in a way more in unison with their own tastes. Shakespeare was, to them, a bore. They would infinitely have preferred *The Girl Who Fell Down the Back Stairs*, or something of that edifying class of entertainment."

*March 14* "Listen to this," said B., reading the paper at lunch. "Here's some silly ass of a Chinese philosopher who says the universe was made out of dragon's breath. Can you believe it?"

I said, "Easily. Only the other day you asked me to believe that a long time ago (you couldn't say how long) the universe created itself, or was created (you weren't certain which) out of nothing. Then as the result of something called Evolution (which you couldn't explain) we went to America in a steam-boat, and we agreed, if you remember, that the stuff coming out of the funnels was dragon's breath. No, I see nothing wrong with your Chinese philosopher."

B. "Then you believe that the moon is made of green cheese?"

J.A. "I do not. But I think it's highly probable that it's made of pink cheese. Anything is easier to believe than that the moon is just made of moon."

B. "And witch-doctors?"

J.A. "Of course! If you told me that I had perforated my infundibulum and should be dead within twenty-four hours I should certainly die in that time."

B. "And black magic?"

J.A. "Why harp on colour? What is snow but white magic? But we can cut all this short. I believe in everything except the credible."

All my life I have taken a great interest in conjuring. In fact, at Christmas parties I used to do a trick! Somebody would be made to choose the eight of hearts and the nine of spades—how I got them to pick these cards I can't remember—after which I would produce the nine of hearts and the eight of spades, saying, "Are these your cards, sir?" If the man said yes the trick was a success. If no I rapidly produced the Union Jack, and the turn was over. I once wrote to the Great Dante, saying, "Dear Sir, Re that trick in which you, being the barber, and your customer change places. It is obvious that at some moment you must be replaced by a double. If you don't want me to detect this moment you ought to buy your double a pair of patent-leather shoes as expensive and as shiny as your own." The Great Dante replied, "Dear Mr Agate, I have taken your advice. Come to-night and you will see that both of us are indistinguishably glossy."

Putting two and two together, it is obvious that I am a

person with an astonishing capacity for belief, yet one who is at the same time extremely difficult to take in. In other words, the very person to accept Dr Tahra Bey's invitation to his platform at the *Æolian Hall*.

I was asked to write on a piece of paper the name of some object in the hall which I should like him to touch. I wrote this down at a table in a far corner of the stage. Shielding the paper with my hand, I put what I had written into an envelope and sealed it, and gave it to an attendant, who held it in full view of the audience. Dr Tahra Bey then took me by the hand, and for five minutes conducted a frantic thought-reading search through the hall with me acting as his guide. He failed. I then said the object was my own cigar-case, which I had slipped into the pocket of the friend with me. This, of course, was B. The chairman intervened: "Mr Agate, you cannot have heard. While you were writing I announced that the object must not belong to the person assisting Tahra Bey." Whereupon the latter said to me in French, "Will you have the kindness to try another experiment immediately?" I agreed. Again Dr Tahra Bey took my hand, and this time led me at a gallop to the middle of the room, and at once put his hand on a lady's white shawl. My envelope being opened, the chairman read out, "The white shawl."

Of course, there may have been somebody looking through the black velvet curtains, and reading "white shawl" with the aid of Sam Weller's "pair o' patent double million magnifyin' gas microscopes of hextra power." Of course, there may have been somebody lying on a batten in the roof with an arrangement of mirrors and binoculars. Of course, the writing-table may have had transmitters which instantaneously reproduced my handwriting. Of course, all this Heath Robinsonian spying may have been telepathed to Dr Tahra Bey. I find the thought-reading explanation easier. Later I stood on the stage by the coffin in which Dr Tahra Bey was buried alive. It is possible that this had a false bottom. It is possible that the management of the *Æolian Hall* had permitted a trapdoor to be cut in its stage, and that during the eight minutes of his immuring Dr Tahra Bey was smoking

a cigarette in the artists' room. I prefer to believe that Dr Tahra Bey is an Oriental endowed by nature with remarkable and extraordinary powers, though not infallible, which I should expect a conjurer to be. The fact that some of his experiments were unsuccessful was to my mind a further indication of genuineness. B. agreed.

*March 15* Sat up late reading Christopher Isherwood's *Wednesday*. *Mr Norris Changes Trains*, first published in 1935, and now in a cheap edition. All about the place of sex-perversion in international socialism—the matter of a long-short story by Conrad written in R.L.S.'s *New Arabian Nights* manner. Extraordinarily well done. The more incredible the people are the more clearly you 'see' them. At the end of the story they are all as alive as eels.

*March 19* War scare again. As a practical step towards *Sunday*. resisting the German menace it is proposed to decorate Waterloo Bridge with the largest poster ever made. In favour, I understand, of 'voluntary compulsion,' the new cant phrase for conscription.

*March 20* Inspected my dug-out, and found seven feet of water in it. At the club nothing talked of except the war scare. Exactly like General Pirleton in *Mr Pepys's Diary of the War*, or whatever it was called. Here is some of the gossip. The hospitals have been told to prepare for 100,000 casualties during the first twenty-four hours of hostilities. We have something up our sleeve that the Germans don't know about. London and Paris will be roaring furnaces within a week. Our Air Force is twice the advertised size. G.H.Q. has removed to Bristol. We have bought Rumania's oil output for two years. Half the German tanks are cardboard. And so on and so forth.

*March 22* After the theatre Bertie van Thal and Jock *Wednesday*. coaxed me to sup out of my usual orbit. They took me to the Moulin d'Or, next to Kettner's. Excellent. But what a trap for a critic! I had just been to

see a screen flash-back of Sarah Bernhardt. "There," said I, in my loudish voice, "was a personality. You would have recognised Sarah at the bottom of a coal-mine. Modern actresses have no personality. I suppose I have seen Carol Goodner and Constance Cummings twenty times at least. But if they were to walk into this restaurant now I shouldn't be able to tell t'other from which!" Whereupon two ladies sitting at a table not two yards away, and whose beauty and charm I had already remarked, sat up like offended rattlesnakes. "Those," whispered Jock and Bertie simultaneously, "are Carol Goodner and Constance Cummings!"

*March 23* This afternoon the B.B.C. faded out in the middle *Thursday*. of the lovely Largo in Handel's *Music for the Royal Fireworks* to permit of a tea-time talk on "Making the Most of your Looks." This began: "My talk this afternoon is on Deportment. First of all I want you to stand with your back to the wall—about half a yard distant—then step back against the wall. Now, girls, what part of you was the first to touch the wall? Tell me the truth! It was your behind, of course, and it ought to have been your shoulders!"

*March 24* My investment of £10 on the Grand National *Friday*. resulted in a profit of £24. Of this £12 10s. was a place double on Halcyon Gift, second in the Lincolnshire H'cap, and Workman, to-day's winner. If both horses had won I should have netted £200. However, £24 will do.

*March 25* Took the odd £4 to Alexandra Palace, and came *Saturday*. back with £8. Ought to have done better, as I backed four winners. It would have been *five* if George, the chauffeur, who does my betting for me, had stuck to Victor Smyth's Selected in the third race. Unfortunately the look of some other animal unsettled him, and I gave way. He now agrees with me that the proper method of backing horses is the kitchen table, the midday *Star*, and a pin. As

it's all bookmaker's money I am inclined to think George's stakes are too modest. "In gaming," said Jonathan Wild, "any man may be a loser who doth not play the whole game."

*March 27* After Moiseiwitsch had performed at the Savage *Monday*. Club dinner on Saturday night the Vice-Commodore of a famous yacht club said, "Is that fellah a professional?"

*March 29* Dispersal sale of Henriques's stud of Hackneys. *Wednesday.* They have given Nanette to George Lancaster, pensioned off Crusader, and retained only Viking, for stud purposes. Everybody there. I bought an exquisite yearling filly by Viking. Bay, with two white feet, a lovely forchand, tail right on top of her back, and beautiful quality throughout. At twenty guineas Throup thinks this was the best and cheapest animal at the sale. It was the only one I wanted, Edgar in my opinion having bred mostly from the wrong mares. The 55 animals fetched £1989.

*March 31* Called at Clare Greet's flat to choose "anything *Friday*. I liked among her personal belongings," in addition to her collection of theatrical autographs specifically left to me. I chose a set of old chairs.

Lawrence Anderson died this week. He had a magnificent voice, which he used with great effect as Brother Martin in *Saint Joan*. His performance in *Berkeley Square* was, to me, much more impressive than Leslie Howard's. But he could not wear modern clothes, a disability which he shared with many better and, perhaps, with all romantic actors. Irving wearing a frock-coat *on the stage* resembled a seaside phrenologist, and Forbes-Robertson in a bowler suggested a hairdresser slipping out for lunch. Jack Anderson, togged up for a drawing-room comedy, looked like something in a wedding-group at Balham, and was very angry when I said so in print. A *bon viveur*, a good teller of longish stories, and a fine, adventurous spirit. He was handsome and had presence, as a nephew of Mary Anderson should. He was forty-six.

*April 1* Went to the Plaza with George Mathew this afternoon and saw in contiguity a long, abject, stupefying inanity called *St Louis Blues* and an excellent, unostentatious film about a small-town doctor, called *A Man to Remember*. As we came out the newspaper placards had "Hitler's Speech." This was his reply to Chamberlain's announcement of this country's guarantee to Poland, and turned out to be the tamest thing in counterblasts. This means that for the time being the war scare is over.

*April 5* Having nothing to say on Sunday last, I wrote *Wednesday*. my article in the form of a Walkley essay, introducing words like 'eptitude' and 'scioness.' This morning I get an anonymous postcard :

Shade of Laurence Sterne to Shade of James Agate :  
"I vow, sir, that what you wrote was vastly pretty.  
Pray, what language did you call it ? "

Decide to spend Easter in Paris doing nothing. B. goes with me to help. On the train run into Beaverbrook, who starts his old game of solicitous bullying. How old am I? Sixty-one. Strong? Strong. That's a pity, a strong man at sixty is inclined to overdo things. Why, if I have asthma, do I smoke? And so on and so forth. Suddenly, out of the blue, I hear, "You are a charming writer!" And I think of Hilary Jesson's sermon on throwing bones to promising young dogs. Pinero, of course.

*April 6* Lunch in the Champs-Elysées. After lunch, as *Thursday*. I dislike hot sun and B. likes it, we take our coffee at two separate cafés, one on each side of the Avenue, and communicate through the *chasseurs*. Dine at Philippe's, in the Rue Daunou, and as we leave run into Beaverbrook again. It seems we have chosen the right restaurant, but the wrong hour, which should be *after* nine. The excuse that we are going to the theatre is waved aside; why not a cinema? None of this said; I just sense it. After the play B. and I—I mean B. and not Lord B.—make a tour of the Place Blanche.

April 7 Propose going to a Wagner concert. B. says *Good Friday*. we can hear Wagner in London, and what about a film? I say we can see films in London, whereupon B. collapses, and we go nowhere, except to a *boîte*, where we are rewarded by the sight of Cécile Sorel sitting at a table and looking like a drawing by Toulouse-Lautrec.

April 8 Dine with Beaverbrook at Larue's, the other *Saturday*. guests being a tall man with spectacles and frizzy yellow hair whose name I don't catch, and a young man called Lord Forbes. By the end of the meal I decided that Beaverbrook is seven men in one. The man of business, since he insists on knowing what the week-end traffic of Imperial Airways comes to in cash; the idealist, for to him newspapers are something more than machines for making money; the *dæmonist*, since he is fascinated by the thing, whatever it was, which 'possessed' E. V. Lucas; the dictator; the uncompromising realist; the fanatic, for though I don't gather what the fanaticism is about I recognise the gleam; the imp of mischief. Am struck, as always, by that brain considered purely as mechanism. Like Napoleon, its owner can do two things at once. I tested this to-night and found that while talking to Fuzzy-Wuzzy he had perfectly attended to what I was saying to the other fellow. But it is a brain like a blow-lamp, going straight to the point and missing everything else. For example, he dismissed George Mair as an astonishingly competent journalist, not realising that he was a faun who had lost his way.

April 9 To the Mathurins to see the Pitoëffs in *Easter Sunday*. Tchehov's *The Seagull*. Sorin a really grand piece of arthritic senility ready to break in two like a doll by Caran d'Ache—the actor, Louis Salou, is quite young. Germanova magnificent; she makes you know exactly what sort of actress Arkadina is—a little of the Mrs Pat that was and a lot of the Mrs Pat that is. Masha and Konstantin not too good, but I enormously liked Pitoëff's

Trigórín. P. is a not very good actor who, whenever I see him, is superb. His wife plays the first three acts like an angel, but fails in the fourth. I doubt if this act can ever be played by an actress over forty. A young player called Michel-François was intensely moving as Medvedenko; an older player called Pierre Risch, giving Dorn an almost Shakespearean melancholy, said, "Ou je n'y comprends rien, ou je suis fou, mais cette pièce m'a beaucoup plu" as movingly as ever I heard . words spoken on the stage.

*April 11* Home again, having worn my bowler resolutely *Tuesday*. throughout. Saw only three others all the time I was in Paris—the first worn by a stage detective, the second by a beggar in the Place Clichy, and the third on the head of a would-be vendor of highly unoriginal postcards.

No. 5 in my *Nouveaux Contes Scabreux*. The proprietress of a brothel is disgusted at her husband, who, instead of attending to business, spends the holidays visiting rival establishments with his friends. She complains to the neighbourhood generally, "Voilà trois jours de suite que mon mari fait la noce. C'est dégoûtant!"

*April 14* Jock said to-day, "I am the only critic in London *Friday*. who is too small for his boots."

*April 16* Motored to Birmingham, the Chev. doing the 218 *Sunday*. miles to and from the farm in exactly five hours.

Not bad for a car which has done 36,525 miles in twenty-one months. How I find time to do all this motoring has always puzzled me. The stud now consists of Ego, who is looking well; Volpone, whose name I have changed to King Neptune, and who will be put down this year at some of the smaller shows to learn ringcraft; and the new purchase, Lady Viking, who turns out to be a very fine mover indeed and is a picture to look at.

*April 17* Of a six-foot-four figure whom we saw striding along *Monday*. Regent Street this afternoon Jock said, "Dante without the poetry; Irving without the mystery; Mephistopheles without the fun." It was Sir John Reith.

April 18 To the Holborn Empire to see some of the stars of Tuesday. other days. Wilkie Bard as a prima donna singing

“I want to sing in opera,” and looking strangely like Martin Harvey’s Oedipus; Ada Reeve in the songs she sang in the Manchester pantomime of 1900, and with all her vim unimpaired; Alice Lloyd, who has become an exquisite Renoir; Hetty King, as clever and honest a show-woman as ever wore a man’s dress-coat—this is not Lésc-Tilley, who is in a class apart; Charles Austin inexpressibly funny as an old lady and exactly like Peggy Wood in *Bitter-Sweet*. These Indian summers are not without pathos.

April 19 That great spirit Madeleine Cohen is dead. As Wednesday. the bookmaker said of Marie Lloyd, she had a heart the size of Waterloo Station.

April 21 And now Herman Finek. A great Bohemian, a Friday. good musician, a staunch friend, and a wit. He once inscribed a book “To dear James, from dear Herman.” The funeral was enormously attended. Leslie Henson’s wreath bore the words, “God rest you, merry gentleman.”

April 22 Of course, if I will sit up till five in the morning Saturday. drinking whisky and discussing with Bergel whether Gibraltar is impregnable I must expect to pay for it. Had a bit of a nerve-storm in the ear on the way to Sandown this morning. Could not get any lunch, but pulled myself together with two stiff drinks and a big cigar. Shall not consult a doctor. “Though age from folly could not give me freedom, it doth from childishness,” said Cleopatra, and I say ditto. Read again Stevenson’s *Aes Triplex*, which is all about not fearing death, and reflected how heartening I have always found this when I am feeling well.

April 23 Our persistent rejection of conscription misleads Sunday. both foes and friends. The totalitarian countries are deceived into thinking that the most this

country is going to do to defend demoeracy is to make speeches, while the French point of view is admirably put in to-day's *Observer*:

From Monsieur Daladier downwards the whole of France surges against the theory that they should shed most of the blood while we make most of the munitions. Our individual right to shirk does not square with their universal liability to serve.

*April 25* No. 6 in my *Nouveaux Contes Scabreux*. A *Tuesday*. wealthy woman, who provides a gigolo with his entire income, is aroused one morning with a kiss and a request to pay his income tax.

*April 26* Conscription at last. For young men between *Wednesday*. twenty and twenty-one. There are to be no exceptions and no favouritism.

*April 28* Very nervy and worried about Hitler's reply to the *Friday*. Roosevelt manifesto. Cheer up when Pavia, with whom I am having a drink in a pub, notices an extremely ugly prostitute with a sailor in tow, and whispers, "Is that the face that sank a thousand ships?" As Leo's whisper is the loudest in London, we drink up and come away immediately.

*May 3* Jock gives me a superb remark made to him by *Wednesday*. Majdalany, the *Referee* critic. The two were in a pub during an interval in last night's play, when the landlord found it necessary to separate two black cats with a soda-siphon.

"What makes it worse, guv'nor, is that they're mother and son!"

"The OEdi-puss complex!" flashed Majdalany.

*May 5* I sometimes wonder that I have any taste left. Here *Friday*. is what I have had to cope with in the last five days. *Monday*. Feverishly run through half a dozen books. Lunch with Francis Sullivan. Back to flat and

review the six books. Dress, and bore myself stiff at the first night of the opera, *The Bartered Bride*. Sup at Rules with Bertie van Thal and a luscious lady who defeats me on the subject of bullock's-blood nails by taking us both back to her Chelsea house and laying and lighting a fire without other tongs. Drive Bertie home, and get to bed about three. *Tuesday*. Lunch at the Langham with Mark Lubbock, of the B.B.C., who wants me to compère an hour's programme of incidental music. Long confab with Stanford Robinson, conductor of the B.B.C. Theatre Orchestra, about our respective neuroses. Keep appointment with Jock at Southwark Cathedral! Next to the Gaumont for the *Wuthering Heights* film, after which a rubbishy play at the St Martin's. Sup with Monty, who tells me his securities have depreciated £30,000 in the last six months. I reply that my unique security has gone up—this being the dug-out! Nobody much at the Savoy except Marie Tempest, in pink with a black ostrich-feather hat. Bed fairly early, say half-past two. *Wednesday*. Write *Tatler* article, lunch with B. at the Jardin des Gourmets, and have a look at the Academy. Next find myself at the Cézanne Exhibition, and here become conscious that my taste is becoming slowly but surely overworked. Only six of the twenty-odd canvases give me any real pleasure, and I stand for ten minutes in front of *Dans le Parc du Château Noir* completely baffled. Am so perturbed by this that I go to Heppell's and buy a three-guinea bottle of gland capsules. Home, dress, and spend the rest of the day swallowing capsules and wallowing in *Turandot* at the Opera. *Thursday*. Write my *Express* notes, lunch with Reggie Pound, go to the Ideal Home Exhibition and there turn over for Peter Page, who gives a recital on the Kaleidakon. The console is in the middle of a lake! Take tea with Peter, his mother, and Claire Luce, write my *John o'London's* article, dress, and brisk myself up for *The Intruder*, the English version of Mauriac's *Asmodée*. Bridge till three. *Friday*. At four o'clock this afternoon, having toiled all day at my *S.T.* article, I refuse to let Peter Page drag me to *Parsifal*. Instead I play bridge so sleepily that Mark and Benno send me home.

*May 6* Jock brings in a newly recorded symphony, and *Saturday*. says I can have it if I can guess the composer. For a long time I think of Cherubini, then at the last moment change my mind, say, "Bizet," and am right! As a piece of ratiocinative guesswork this should rank high. It looks as though the gland capsules are working!

*May 9* Saw, or rather heard, Toscanini last night for the *Tuesday*. first time. It had better be 'heard,' because there was nothing to see. Listening to the Coriolan Overture, the Fourth Symphony, and the *Eroica*, I felt that I was once more being drilled in the Long Valley at Aldershot. For this was drilled music. *I heard things in the score for the first time*. But even this reminded me of how one day I took my long-distance spectacles into the country, saw every leaf distinctly, and lost all sense of atmosphere! What I heard to-night was a *map* of the music, or Beethoven anatomised. Personally I like my Beethoven to be more human, less tidy, a little more sprawling, more beer- and tobacco-stained.

*May 11* Brother Edward sends picture postcard of *Thursday*. Schopenhauer:

Does this entice you to read him? No? Well, I have no other inducement to offer except the works.

*May 17* The showing season opened yesterday with the *Wednesday*. Devon County Show at Axminster. Sat up working till 4 A.M. Started for Axminster at 10.15, reached Yeovil at 1.30. Lunch, and then on to Axminster, where Ego won a good class in smashing style. Dined with Albert at the Bell, Gloucester, where they charge only 16s. for an excellent bottle of Bollinger N.V. This is 5s. less than in town. Arrived Sutton Coldfield about 1, the good Mrs Skeat, most admirable of hostesses, having sat up for us in her dressing-gown. I hear the Three Tuns is shortly to come down, which distresses me. Only one lavatory, every inconvenience, and yet the most comfortable inn I have ever struck! They make me feel so much like a private guest that

paying the bill is always a delicate matter. I have even known Mrs S. telephone to London to know what I would like to eat on arrival. Spent the morning at the farm, liking Lady Viking, who is coming on nicely, and disliking King Neptune, who refuses to carry his almost excess of action like a gentleman. Albert promises to get to work on this, and if an animal can be 'positioned' he will do it. Home at 7.30. Finished John Gielgud's *Early Stages*, which I had begun in the car, gutted Giles Playfair's *Kean*, and wrote 1700 words about them. Went out to supper, and bed about 3 A.M.

*May 18* An extraordinary coincidence—the receipt within *Thursday*. a week of two letters written in prison, one from Wormwood Scrubs and the other from Pentonville, the authors of both having been moved to write to me by the same reason. This one is, I think, of general interest :

No. 92, R. GREY,  
Pentonville Prison, N.7

DEAR JAMES AGATE,

I derived so much pleasure from your *Ego* books that I decided to devote some of the, alas! too ample spare time I have in here to writing you about them. It will be a jolly little conundrum for you to puzzle out which of your many friends and admirers is hidden beneath the *alias* of Robt. Grey. But do not trouble to reply, as I am just finishing a sweet little episode of eighteen months' solitary confinement, and shall be at liberty about the same time that you receive this. I will then reveal my identity, and perhaps you would lunch or dine with me. If so I will promise to introduce you to a Chambertin of the haleyon year '11, which is indeed more of an ichor, an ambrosia, than a wine. If I have any money I will pay; if not, you can! I have a very fine edition of Dryden's *Essay on Dramatic Poesie*, eighteenth century, vellum, which I would like to present to you, by the way. I have often meant to do so.

SARAH. You say that "Popes failed of an audience" with Sarah. Surely this is mere hyperbole? I cannot imagine the Holy Father seeking an audience with anybody. But was it founded on something? Here are a few facts about the *Dame aux Camélias*, some of which may be new to you.

Eugénie Doche was the creator. The play had been hawked all over Paris when Fechter brought it to her in London. "It is the *Vie de Bohème* without its wit," said Montigny of the Gymnase. (True enough, too!) Déjazet said that Marguerite Gautier was outside her line of country. "Your drama takes place in a world I know nothing of," said Fargueil to young Dumas. "What, not at *your* age? Then, certes, you never will," Dumas snapped back. Boufflé, of the old Vaudeville in the Place de la Bourse, was persuaded by Doche to give the play a chance. But it was to be acted alternately with a farce in which Déjazet appeared as a lovesick nigger boy! Young Dumas—he was very young in '52—didn't expect it to run a night. Suddenly rehearsals were stopped. The authorities banned the piece on grounds of public morals, just as to-day they ban *La Prisonnière* here! But Doche, through the Due de Morny, approached Louis Nap, not yet Emperor—who was an old admirer, and he said, "Qu'on lui rende son rôle à cette enfant." So the interdict was withdrawn. Fechter in his passionate acting destroyed many hundred pounds of Doche's valuable lace. Young Dumas promised Doche other plays, but never kept his word. Not his fault entirely, for Montigny insisted on Rose Chéri having *Demi-monde* and *Diane de Lys*.

**UNITARIANISM.** I also subscribe to that open creed. Maugham in *Of Human Bondage* says (more or less), "A Unitarian is one who violently disbelieves everything in which everybody else believes; and who believes profoundly in he does not quite know what." And I notice Lloyd George, when told by Lord Riddell (the War Diaries) that Northcliffe was a Unitarian, said, "It seems to me a cold, unsatisfactory sort of faith." Well, perhaps! People do get so *beleidigt* if one describes oneself as atheist. I don't like hurting people's feelings, although I think with Anatole France one is either born with the faculty of belief or never acquires it. I came across something very similar to this in Rousseau the other day when re-reading the *Confessions*. It seems to me that perhaps atheists are actually fifty thousand years further along the scale of human evolution. I would like to give you the quotation from Epicurus on the logic of Free Will. But space forbids.

**ZEITGEIST.** I call this detestable age that of the Apotheosis of the Lout. It is considered fine and grand to-day to interpret *noblesse oblige* as the obligation ALWAYS to kick a

man when he's down. And it is the age of sciolism. Moreover people can't even *read*. Have you ever noticed that? They glance through a periodical or a book, get an entirely wrong version, and then quote it as gospel. "I seen it in the paper." Have you noticed how the modern trend is to solve social problems by euphemism? Re-christen Distressed Areas and they will vanish! Call madhouses and prison cells by fancy names and they magically become something else.

It is dreadful that **YOU** with your gift for dramatic criticism should be forced for economic reasons to review books, when, if you will pardon my saying so, you have no talent for this at all. But perhaps it is even more tragic that *I* should more or less be driven to crime to live, when, with my erudition AND temperament, literary criticism is my obvious *métier*!

Sincerely,  
ROBERT GREY

*May 19 From Brother Edward :  
Friday.*

"Les anciennes mœurs orientales sont si prodigieusement différentes des nôtres que rien ne doit paraître extraordinaire à quiconque a un peu de lecture. Un Parisien est tout surpris quand on lui dit que les Hottentots font couper à leurs enfants mâles un testicule. Les Hottentots sont peut-être surpris que les Parisiens en gardent deux."—VOLTAIRE, *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, article "Circoncision."

*May 20 That generous soul and first-rate comedian Barry Saturday.* Lupino has added a diamond to my crown of walking-sticks—the ebony and ivory cane used by Vesta Tilley in "Algy." How narrow is fame! He told me that his boy had never heard of V.T. Determined to test this, I showed the stick to my taxi-driver, who said, "Lumme, in course I remembers Vesta Tilley. Worn't she Lady Tree?"

*May 21 Here is No. 3, contributed by me, in Brother Sunday. Edward's Ecole des Morts series :*

Late to-night a member leaving the Savage Club

somewhat hazily asked the night porter if he should be taking away any luggage. The porter answered, "You brought nothing into the club, sir, and it's certain you can't take nothing out."

*May 22* *Sixth Floor* at the St James's turned out to be *Monday*. Tchehov's *Seagull* without any Tchehov. Treated

Peter Page, Jock, and Bertie van Thal to a lobster and asparagus supper at Rules. Afterwards to Peter's, who treated us to Scriabin and Strauss. What Jock calls an urbane evening. Peter told us a delicious story of a young conductor coming into the Garrick Club fresh from a triumphant series of symphony concerts in Palestine. "It's by no means a safe country," he proclaimed to a group which included Beecham. "One of the natives took a shot at me!" Which brought down on him the silky remark: "So they're musical!"

*May 23* Letter from Clifford Bax:

*Tuesday.*

*G 2 Albany*  
*London, W.1*  
*May the 22nd*

MY DEAR JAMES,

I hope earnestly that you will be able to get to Bath on Monday. Perhaps you could come to the Pump Room Hotel for dinner? Although they probably 'change,' dress is never, to my mind, of much importance. Besides, are not kings above conventions, and are you not King James the First of Fleet Street?

When you write my obituary notice you must include the words "Many people supposed that poor dear Bax had ceased for some years to write. They did not know that he was almost incessantly racked with gout, often in his right hand. I remember the angelic but sardonic smile which crept over his hyper-sensitive mouth when a young publisher, coming to commission a book and finding Bax on a couch, with crutches beside him, asked, 'Does gout just incommodate you, or does it hurt?' This is my last memory of Bax, one of the steeliest minds that ever concealed itself within a velvet glove. He was a man, take him

for all in all . . . My readers will be able to fill out the quotation." Etc., etc., etc.

Give my benediction to Jock—a man after my own heart.

Affectionately and goutily,

Your humble servant,

CLIFFORD BAX

*May 27* Everybody seems to be contributing to *Brother Saturday*. Edward's *Ecole des Morts* series. William Hickey is the latest, with this story told him by a steward on the *Aquitania*. A man was buried at sea. In the midst of a storm which arose soon after, it was suddenly observed that the body had been washed up on the deck at precisely the same spot where it had previously rested. This is No. 4 in the series.

*May 29* George Mathew joined me at Birmingham on *Monday*. Friday. On Saturday we motored to Shrewsbury, where the car broke down. Owing to the gallantry of such Shropshire lads as work in garages, we started again after a few hours' delay and got as far as Brecon, where we slept. Whoever says you cannot get a drink in Wales on Sunday does not know Brecon; the local populace was imbibing freely at 10 a.m. Perhaps an exception was being made in honour of the 250th anniversary of the raising of the 24th Regiment of Foot, now the South Wales Borderers, who were depositing their colours in Brecon Cathedral. We watched a naïve and moving procession which included two Chelsea pensioners and a number of old soldiers of the Great War. A lovely day full of the honey-breath of summer. By the way, I have just signed a petition for the grant of a Civil Pension to Alfred Douglas, not because he is a good poet, but because forty winters have besieged that brow and dug deep trenches in that beauty's field. Spent the morning inspecting the Siddons' birthplace, and exploring unknown mid-Wales. Over Brecon Beacon to Hirwain, then along the Vale of Neath, past Clydach's statue to Ludwig Mond. This is exactly like Mistral's statue at Arles, except that it is minus the bag,

and the figure carries a stick instead of an umbrella. Then to Llandovery over the *grand* Black Mountain Pass, and so back to Brecon for lunch. Eighty miles or so. The clotted cream of the scenery came later. This was the drive from Brecon to Bristol, via the ferry. Dined and slept at the Grand Spa Hotel. Twelve hours of complete well-being. Spent to-day judging the harness classes at the North Somerset show at Ashton Court—an exquisite setting. George Lancaster brought Viking, and the old horse was in great form. So too has been George Mathew. His best story was that of contemplating a hire-purchase bedroom in a Tottenham Court Road shop-window, and discovering that the bedside book was called *Brewery Management*. Arrived home at one in the morning, to find a letter from the man Chenhalls showing the accountancy side of him at its most depressing.

May 30 From an unknown friend :  
Tuesday.

### THE ACATE

This Acate is founde in a flood that is called Acate, and there be founde of them dyuers maners, there be some black, and some whyt with dyuers sercles about them, and some but one and some iii. And such there be that haue the fygures of men or beastes or of trees. And some be grene as a Jasper is, myngled with red dropes: and this Acate stone is full of vertu, there are a maner of these Acate stones that haue dyuers veynes in them lyke golde, and Acate is medled as it were the colour of gold, or after the colour of wexe is best. The verry fyne and trewe Acate saueth & comforteth an olde man, and sleketh his thurste, and maketh hym stronge agayne, and kepeth a body from venym and from the bytyng of Serpentes, and other wode bestes. And also it maketh a man to haue good spekyng & also the very fyne Acate when a body putteth hym among herbes, he sweteth, & if a man put hym close in his fyste, another body shall nat se that man. And this maner of Acate is somewhat grene, and spottyd with red dropes.

*A Lytell Boke of the XXIII Stones  
Pryncipalles, that Profyteth Most to  
Mans Body. (Circa 1585.)*

May 31 Off to Portsmouth for the Royal Counties and Wednesday. National Hackney Show. A lovely evening drive in perfect weather; the lilacs and laburnums at their best.

June 1 Novice classes all day. These produce Personality, yet another son of Colman's great horse Spotlight, a very good-looking, fine-moving, brown three-year-old stallion. He is in Ego's class to-morrow, and looks dangerous. Portsmouth is crammed full, and there is only one room to be had. Fortunately, as I have to share it with Fred Leigh, whom I suspect of snoring, it is immense. What my *S.T.* article will read like I don't know. It is three o'clock, and I have just finished writing it at the open window between a lively sea and Fred making a noise like a herd of elephants.

June 2 Albert says Ego will "walk" the class to-day, Friday. which he promptly proceeds to do. Personality does not show up, her driver, Jimmie Black, saying that it is asking too much of a novice three-year-old to pit him against Ego, who is now eight and in magnificent fettle. I go round to Ego's box to congratulate him, and find I am forestalled by Vera Pearce, who covers both of us with lipstick. Run down to the town to buy the stable lads a wrist-watch and a cigarette-case. Poor Albert has to be content with my best thanks, the shade of the man Chenhalls precluding more.

June 4 G. H. Lewes said apropos of Fechter that he instinctively mistrusted any French actor when he was being what French critics call *profond et rêveur*. At the Dickens house at Portsmouth I saw a photograph of a family party. This included Dickens, a lot of females, Wilkie Collins, and, lolling on an elbow, *très profond* and *très rêveur*, Fechter. I bought an imitation-ivory plaque of the house, which I intend to present to Jock.

June 6 Nineteen of his colleagues assembled last night at Tuesday. Scott's to honour Tom Driberg ("William Hickey" of the *Daily Express*) for his reporting

of the New York Fair. A tiny room in which we took off coats and waistcoats. In view of the terrific heat, the menu—lamb chops with broad beans followed by devils on horseback—was poorly chosen, and I ate nothing. A. J. A. Symons in a witty speech said that Tom always reminded him of Hardy's

It was as though a garland of red roses  
Had fallen from the head of some smug nun.

Hannen Swaffer also spoke well in a speech beginning, "I remember travelling to Paris with Driberg. The King and Queen were also on the train."

*June 12 Two letters.*

*Monday.*

NEW YORK HERALD-TRIBUNE  
230 West 41st Street  
New York  
June 1939

DEAR JAMES AGATE,

On the eve of my departure for three months in China I must do what I should have done long ago and tell you—amid complete futility—how sorry I am about the matter of your *Herald-Tribune* stories. It all happened when I was enjoying the comparative peace and quiet of Spain and China last year, and it is most confusing and embarrassing to me. All I know is that I was delighted with your articles, found them a brilliant addition to the paper, and was looking forward to their continuance. I am more sorry than I can tell you that anything happened to end them, and it is a sign of my impotence in the matter that I am unable to do anything to rectify it. I have nothing to do with the running of the dramatic department save to write my own stuff, and I am glad that I haven't, since I dislike intensely the business of editing. In this case, however, I am sorry that I didn't have anything to say in the matter. I trust that you will believe me when I tell you of my deep and respectful personal and professional regard for you—and that goes even if I have the misfortune to be pilloried in *Ego 4*.

Sincerely,  
RICHARD WATTS, Jr.

*Villa Volpone*

10 Fairfax Road, N.W.6

12th June, 1939

MY DEAR RICHARD WATTS,

So the visit to America of King George and Queen Elizabeth has had some result! It has made one American think of me!

Let me recapitulate. I asked the *New York Herald-Tribune* for more money. No answer. I said that if writing for the *Herald-Tribune* was looked upon as largely its own reward, as in the case of the *Manchester Guardian* in England, I would *not* ask for more. No answer. Did they want my articles to go on? No answer. Did they want my articles to stop? No answer. Would they behave like charming cultivated Americans and reply to my letters and cables? No answer.<sup>1</sup>

There is a faint chance of my knowing before I die why Hannibal turned back, who wrote Shakespeare's plays, and what happened to the *Marie Celeste*. There is none, I take it, of my ever knowing the reason for the silence of the *New York Herald-Tribune*.

In the meantime be assured that neither you nor the paper will be pilloried in *Ego 4*. Or pilloried only in the nicest possible manner. I shall probably pelt you with sour grapes. Also please realise that I still retain the warmest regard for you. I quit you not "wiz despise," as Mme Karen Bramson, standing on the poop, said to the receding cliffs of Dover after the failure of her play. And I thank you enormously for writing.

Now will you please execute a commission for me? If you run across that exquisite lynx George Jean Nathan will you give him my equally warm regards?

Yours very sincerely,

JAMES AGATE

June 15 My mail this morning consisted of a pleasant Thursday. letter from P. G. Wodehouse inquiring after the progress of *Ego 4*; a letter from Hadley nega-

<sup>1</sup> For twelve months the *New York Herald-Tribune* paid for my articles at less than one-third the lowest rate I have received in this country during the last ten years. So far as I remember I sent six letters and four cables.

tiving the notion—the paper's notion, by the way—that I should tour Scandinavia for the *S.T.* on the lines of my New York visit—the stumbling-block, apparently, being that I insist on travelling *en prince*, and the paper's notions do not rise above *grand seigneur*; and a first edition of A. J. A. Symons's *The Quest for Corvo*, which the author had promised me at the Driberg dinner.

June 17      Letter to A. J. A. Symons:  
Saturday.

*Villa Volpone*  
10 Fairfax Road, N.W.6  
June 17, '39

DEAR SYMONS,

I am on the point of finishing *Quest for Corvo*. The book's existence at all is a miracle. First there was the right kind of curiosity to be aroused, second it had to be aroused in the right person, and third there had to be the original Corvo. Well, the hat trick came off!

The further I read, the more Fr. Rolfe seems to be a composite portrait of people I know. The venom is pure Leo Pavia. The postcard about the haddock-fed lady who, "saltish, perishes of pure displeasure," is pure Jock. "I personally and of predilection can be indifferent to opinions. But officially I must correct error" is pure Brother Edward, just as the latter's

Whither, oh wand'ring Spirit, wilt thou go?  
Where shall thy all too fretful Ghost be laid?  
Thy pilgrimage on Earth long over-stayed,  
Thy presence in the Firmament *de trop*!

is pure Corvo. (Who all these people are you will know when you get my *Ego* books.) As for your share in the masterpiece, I can only repeat what Harland wrote to Rolfe about his *Chronicles of the House of Borgia*, and talk of the "labour and learning, imagination, vision, humour, irony, wit, daring, the tremendously felicitous and effective manner of it." Now are you satisfied?

I have one reservation and one only. The book has suffered a little from the unavoidable scrappiness of my reading of it. It never leaves me. I read it before putting

out the light, before the salts in the morning, latrinally, prandially, and whenever I can spare a moment. I read it at horse-shows, and when my class comes in momentarily desist; I keep my eye on Ego, but my finger on the place. The result is that my view of the book as a whole is a bit muddled. Have you, forgive me, elaborated it a little too much? Is it all a little too much like a map whose scale should be a mile to a mile? Nevertheless, and perhaps because of this, your book has made me feel as one of the Meynells felt about the author of *Moby Dick*, that having read Rolfe, or about Rolfe, is to be "partly made of him for ever." In future I propose to see life reflected in a Corvex mirror.

And what a bit of luck for you was the irruption of Maundy Gregory. This tops up the whole thing in the best Arabian Nights manner! I feel that Rolfe would have been immensely tickled by this vast, incongruous patronage. I feel that he is being tickled somewhere now. My sense of pattern resists the notion that Corvo has stopped. There must be a limbo somewhere in which that harsh chord is being resolved.

Yours ever,

JAMES AGATE

*June 18* Symons's book begins, "My quest for Corvo was Sunday. started by accident one summer afternoon in 1925, in the company of Christopher Millard." At lunch to-day Leo Pavia said, "You ask me about Millard. He was a most impressive person, immensely tall and imposing, and with a voice which had the organ-like quality of Forbes-Robertson and the thrilling tones of young Ainley. He compiled the only complete bibliography of Wilde's works, and wrote the most complete account of his trial. He was a school-master with ideas about the relationship of pedagogue and pupil centuries behind his times! His enemies said he got into all sorts of trouble; it would be truer to say he got into only one sort. He had enormous intellectual pride backed by colossal brains, was always half-drunk, and never went to bed for the normal reason. He was the most splendid anachronism I have known."

June 23 From A. J. A. Symons :  
Friday.

6 Little Russell Street  
Bloomsbury, W.C.  
June 22nd, 1939

MY DEAR AGATE,

Your letters will be the ruin of me. How, after your kind words, can I be otherwise than suffused with authorial vanity from the neck upwards? I walk about in a state of mental flush which is, I am certain, intolerable to all my friends. From time to time I pull from my pocket one of your numerous encomia,<sup>1</sup> which I study with an absorbedness so thorough that even strangers are almost forced to ask what I am looking at. The slightest enquiry (even the raising of an eyelid) suffices; at once I read aloud, in a resounding voice, the nearest favourable phrase—usually twice. What is the proverb about killing by kindness?

I look forward to *Ego*, and to elucidating your obscure comparisons with Jock and Edward. Leo Pavia (?) is a wonderfully Corvine name, and you write as though there is such a person. I don't agree that Millard was always half-drunk, but he liked a glass of wine frequently, as I do.

Next Tuesday or so I am going to Scotland on another, less literary, quest, and return to broadcast on July 14. Thereafter I shall devote my life to the task of luring you to the waterless part of Essex in which I live, read, and have my musical-boxes.

Warmly yours,  
A. J. A. SYMONS

June 24 "The invariable result of inviting somebody to Saturday. straighten out your affairs is that he flattens you out," said Peter Page, when I showed him a letter from the man Chenhalls saying the horses must be put down. With this in my pocket I watched Ego at West Bromwich repeat his win of two days ago at the Staffordshire County Show. He was at his golden best to-day. Just as I write this George, the chauffeur, comes in, and the following colloquy takes place :

J.A. (*snapping*). Well, what is it?

<sup>1</sup> Between June 17 and June 23 I wrote Symons five times.

GEORGE (*speaking by rote*). I think you ought to know the car's in a bad way. The engine wants re-boring, the brakes aren't safe, we want at least three new tyres, and the shock-absorbers are giving me a pain in the belly.

J.A. (*scenting cheek*). Pain in the what?

GEORGE (*simply, as one stating a fact*). Belly.

J.A. (*rudely*). You and your belly can go to blazes!

GEORGE (*unruffled*). What about turning it in and getting a new car?

J.A. (*speechless*). . . .

GEORGE (*without expression*). Well, can I have the price of a new window on the driving side?

J.A. (*with studied calm*). Why?

GEORGE (*with a grin*). I've broke it!

June 25 Letter to Monty Shearman:  
*Sunday.*

Villa Volpone  
June 25, '39

DEAR MONTY,

The purport of this is to take leave of you until, with luck, some time in 1941. I have discharged my valet, the chauffeur trembles, Fred is a jelly, and even Jock hangs in precarious balance.

I shall hope, in my retreat, to have occasional news of your continued welfare and happiness. Even during these last disturbed weeks my spirit has been lightened by hearing that you and Eric Smith still pass gay evenings together bandying misquotations from Shakespeare.

But how is't with me when every *knock*, as you would say, *afrights* me?

The

rest

is

silence.

WILKINS MICAWBER AGATE

June 26 Gave a small luncheon party at the Savage Club.  
*Monday.* The guests were Prince Chula of Siam, Prince Birabongse of Siam, better known as "B. Bira" the racing motorist, C. B. Cochran, and Gordon Williams. Chula is very Oxford, and you would take him for English.

Bira is the exact shade of my best brogues and an enchanting little idol to look at. He has the prettiest English wife and a passion for toy trains, and both young men live in flats whose décor out-Messels Messel. The talk at lunch centred almost entirely in Siamese myths, and whether these would be good Cochran material. Bira doesn't drink, and the four of us got through a bottle of hock and two bottles of Bollinger, after which I went to Gielgud's farewell 'do' of Hamlet at the Lyceum, and supper at the Danish Legation.

*June 29* Brother Edward:  
*Thursday.*

From an Embalmer in S.W. London: "We do not fear the results of our service to you to-morrow, for we have done our very best to-day." (*L'Ecole des Morts*, No. 5.)

*June 30* Barry Lupino gave me a walking-stick used on the *Friday*. stage by Harry Lauder.

*July 1* The war scare all over again. In the meantime *Saturday*. there is still some fun to be had. Here is the last sentence in a circular letter sent out by a West End firm of outfitters :

Whilst, as we have said, it is necessary for us to be ready to supply our customers with what they need under any circumstances, no one would rejoice more than ourselves at a European situation that caused our large stock of uniforms to become unsaleable.

*July 2* The Lyceum closed its doors last night. Not much *Sunday.* upset about this. All of the theatre in which Irving played was pulled down some time in the early nineteen hundreds, only the pillars remaining. A great scene at the end, with verses recited by John Gielgud, and a lot of enthusiasm which I take to have been jubilation. After all, it isn't every day we pull down a theatre in which there is always a danger that somebody may produce Shakespeare.

Supped at the Café Royal with Leo Pavia, who saw Irving's Hamlet at the 1885 revival.

J.A. What was he like?

L.P. You couldn't hear half of what he said.

J.A. What did he *look* like?

L.P. As though he had seen the Ghost!

We spent the rest of the meal devising a love poem in Brother Edward's manner, but could not get beyond the first line:

Come live with me and be my Hate . . .

*July 4*      Two letters:

*Tuesday.*

*Brick House*

*Finchingfield, Essex*

June 30, 1939

MY DEAR EGOMET BONMOT,

Well! (As Pater used to start sentences; had you remarked the habit?) I have read the first volume in incessant astonishment. Your past seems to telescope before me in a dream—my own; and several times since I started on *Ego* I have woken with a feeling such as one has when staying in a strange house—but my feeling is not wonder where, but who, I am. Then I remember that I was born at Pendleton in 1877, drink champagne abstractedly as a lubricant for work, collect show ponies, and hold the theatre in the hollow of my hand. Slowly the dream wears off, to be put on again as soon as I re-dip into your diary. At first the drug left me discontented: "Once drinking deep of that divinest anguish, How could I seek the empty world again?" but slowly I am reconciling myself to not being wholly Agate; to not receiving, every day, such letters as those you print; to not understanding the theatre; and to being without a secretary-collaborator who refers to "immoderate" piers. Brother Edward has not made any lengthy appearance yet, but I have enjoyed the references to him; Brother Gustave is more real, and Jock more near. There is indeed a Corvine salt sprinkled on Jock's wit and turns of phrase, though with a benignance lacking in the Baron. This is an interim letter to declare again my gratitude for the gift, and to assert the satisfaction I am receiving from your energy recollected in tranquillity.

C. E. Montague must be one of my blind spots. I read *Fiery Particles* carefully; and called it secondary Kipling—not, by my standards, a term of abuse. And I read a novel. Your commendation leaves me curious to try further. I am also looking forward to *your* novels, and suspect you of another, despite the resignation of the pen which you proclaim twice.

Colville is twenty miles south of this house; that is to say, it would take you forty minutes longer to get here than it would to visit Peter Page. I hope to tempt you to the longer journey as soon as I return from Scotland, whither I go on Monday. Alas, I shall miss the dinner on the 6th, though I hope to find a way of reminding Tom, on that occasion, that I am still a friend of Driberg. And, if I may say so, the same to you!

Yours sincerely and gratefully,

A. J. A. SYMONS

P.S. What a charming figure you make Monty Shearman cut! Knowing him, I am almost led to believe in Leo Pavia. But not quite, or not yet.

*Villa des Ténèbres*  
*Au Fond du Gouffre*  
*July 3rd, 1939*

DEAR A. J.,

Do you remember Mr Peter Magnus and his epistolary ways of amusing his friends? The haggard address which has startled you above merely means that the hounds of Tax are on Ego's traces. In short, as Mr Micawber would say, the Revenue authorities have Ego by the—I mean, in their unmentionable clutches. Let's hope it's only temporary. I am much more disturbed that you should be *reading Ego*. The first condition of these masterpieces is that they shall be dipped into, not *read*.

Am delighted, on the other hand, that you should have struck Jock's quality. I sensed it at our first interview thirteen years ago, and remember uttering a cry half-way between "Come to my arms, my beamish boy!" and "Hang there like fruit, my soul, till the tree die!" When I find a writer using words as Jock does I am his for ever. Filson Young did it when he wrote of the air at the Escorial being "*strict with frost.*" Osbert Sitwell does it: "Now

would come supper, an orgy of quails and champagne, vivid ices and *angry* jellies." I myself brought it off once, many years ago, when I wrote of Beerbohm Tree's "lavish voicelessness." Corvo dug up out-of-the-way words: I prefer the extraordinary use of the ordinary word. Montague, of course, was a past-master at the game. Apropos—you must NOT judge Montague by the novels and short stories, which are merely genius barking up the wrong tree. He is a critic and essayist, *and nothing else*. I will try to get a copy of his *Dramatic Values* for you.

When you return will you lunch here? The club—where I can still get tick—purveys an admirable Corton at four bob which stands the transit to Swiss Cottage perfectly. I want you to meet Jock, whose quiddity is made of the finest part of pure wit. I find to-day that as my librarian he has stacked Dorothy Sayers's latest unwhisperable poetic drama next to Eric Partridge's Slang Dictionary. But you must discover him for yourself!

Yours ever,  
J. A.

July 10 More A. J. and J. A.  
Monday.

*Innes House*  
Elgin, Morayshire  
July 7, 1939

MY DEAR EGOMET,

What did he mean, Jock, by saying, on or about February 5, 1935, that Disraeli's novels are "a mass of screaming Jewish chichi in gilded saloons in the Dolomites"? As a writer Disraeli has the best qualities of the Victorian Gothic which his ducal heroes preferred for their castellated residences; he is the equivalent of Carlton House Terrace or John Nash in prose (good style, poor detail); and his turn of phrase is as entertaining as your own. "The Countess of —— was a brilliant of the first water . . . and her married daughters were as much like their mother as a pair of diamond earrings are like a diamond necklace." His frivolity is among the forebears of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and I doubt if there is any better political novel than *Vivian Grey*. Who could improve on "Tory men and Whig measures" as a definition? True that in *Henrietta Temple* the hero, catching sight, in a park, for

the first time of the heroine, leans back, overcome, against a tree, and a *slight froth* appears on his lips—but who are we to circumscribe the actions of heroes in parks in such books? No: Jock is wrong, very wrong. Let him read even the immature *Young Duke*, and he will see that it is a feather from an eagle's wing. It is years since I went through my first fit of Disraeli, but when I dipped again recently I found the tang still there.

I am sorry that we are still united in insolvency. We ought to form a club: the Promethean authors. My unfriendly tormentor comes at irregular intervals, and removes a possession each time. The manuscript of Dowson's poems, now maintained in fireproof state by Sir Newman Flower, was once mine; the best of all Beardsley drawings (*The Coiffing*, from *The Rape of the Lock*), now hanging in a black frame on Vyvyan Holland's wall, was once mine. So were the Corvo treasures, over which Sir — — gloats (I hope) twice nightly. And many a rarity besides has gone from me. Each loss represents a remembered crisis. But don't suppose that I haven't still things to show you when you come to Essex, all among the actors. (John Gielgud is a near-by neighbour; and I will tell you the story of ex-neighbour Dodie Smith's telephone.)

And what did *you* mean, James, by saying on July 3rd, 1939, in your last letter to me that you had brought off the vivifying word *once, many years ago*? You do it every week, to my knowledge; and probably, in your angry energy, every day. Or perhaps that was a joke which you thought would slip by unnoticed?

Many thanks indeed for your invitation. I very much look forward to lunching with you and to meeting Jock, and to looking at pictures of horses, and to seeing your Jonsonian villa in the Johnsonian wood, and to being brought down by your double-barrelled conversation.

Yours ever,  
A. J.

P.S. In case the question never crosses your mind, please note that I am willing (and, indeed, eager) that you should make use in *Ego* of any letter I ever write to you.

A. J. A. S.

P.P.S. And if you do so perhaps you had better remind your readers that Egomet Bonmot, the name by which I

now regard you, was originally devised for himself by Thomas Griffiths Wainewright, the murderer, critic, friend of Charles Lamb, and star contributor to the *London Magazine*, of whom Wilde, in his essay, observed, "The fact that a man is a poisoner is nothing against his prose."

*Villa Volpone*

10 Fairfax Road, N.W.6

July 10, '39

DEAR A. J.,

Your "story of Dodie Smith's telephone" intrigues me greatly. (Isn't it time that much condemned verb was admitted into the circle of well-behaved words? To be 'intrigued' by a thing connotes a shade of meaning not to be conveyed otherwise. Surely?) To return to Dodie. In the mind's eye I see the tale of her telephone ranking with Diggory's "Ould Grouse in the gun-room" story, and Marguerite Gautier's "L'histoire du fiacre jaune."

There was some excellent story-telling at the Bray dinner, where we missed you. Apropos of Epstein's *Adam* somebody said, "Not lifelike? Rubbish. It's exactly like all the statues of Queen Victoria. [Pause.] *Mutatis mutandis*, of course." Did you hear the amusing news that Mutanda—my name for the little fellow henceforth—is to be exhibited at Blackpool during Wakes Week at a bob a nob? I remember a Mayor of Blackburn saying about some plaster casts of the Venus de' Medici and a Greek Slave which adorned his Town Hall, "I will fight to the last drop of my blood to have these figures removed. It is a question of art versus decency, and I am not going to allow my wife to be insulted." What will Blackburn say to Blackpool now? I see by to-day's paper that Epstein has withdrawn his opposition to the project, having convinced himself, I suppose, that Mutanda will be exhibited for the proper reasons. But what disillusion awaits, later, the over-apprised virgins of the North!

Penury is a rewarding theme for a comic writer, but a wry one in practice. Hamlet boasted of being bounded in a nutshell, and I ought to be content with the 12 h.p. rabbit-hutch which now, for economy's sake, replaces my big car. But I am not. Is not a rabbit who sports a chauffeur ridiculous? I feel it so.

Anyhow it is in this circumscribed state that I must

come down to Essex, if, indeed, we carry out our promise of mutual visiting. But here we should, I think, tread delicately. Loving you doubtless means loving your musical-boxes, as loving me certainly means loving my horses, and one of us might not stand the test. Then again does not the world owe the Terry-Shaw letters to the infrequency with which their writers met?

You will appreciate why I subscribe myself

Yours distantly,

J. A.

P.S. Reference your P.P.S. and "The fact that a man is a prisoner," etc., etc. But does the fact that a man is something else beginning with the letter 'p' affect his poetry? The article on Wilde in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*—I still stick to the tenth edition—has this delicious sentence: "His poems, containing, *it must be admitted*, some beautiful verse . . ." Italics mine.

*July 11* How shall we measure happiness? Which of three  
*Tuesday*. people at Richmond last night was the happiest

—Hugh Walpole watching the dramatised version of his *Captain Nicholas*, me sitting there criticising it, or my chauffeur playing cricket on the green outside? Did Hugh think of Tchekhov's Trigórin: "To my dying day my writings will always be clever and charming, clever and charming—nothing more. And when I die my friends, passing by my grave, will say, 'Here lies Trigórin. He was a charming writer, but not so good as Turgenev'!" I know that people passing J.A.'s grave will say, "Clever and witty, clever and witty. He was an entertaining critic, but not so good as \_\_\_\_." And then I began to make a mental list of my admitted betters: Hazlitt, Lewes, Archer, Shaw, Walkley, Max, Montague. . . . George is troubled by none of this. He took three wickets, and scored sixteen runs, not out, making the winning hit with a six.

man Chenhalls to flatten *him* out for a change. But he was not there to be flattened. Auditing Lord Nuffield's pocket-money, or confabbing with the Government, or some other silly nonsense.

I can hardly believe that I owe the Revenue no more than the beggarly *current* demand. Maxime de Trailles, James Agate—people of our kind don't do such things. Balzac knew this, and would never have consented to Maxime righting himself. This astronomical conception is to be attributed to Charles Rabon, who, after Balzac's death, finished *Le Député d'Arcis*. In a skit entitled *La Centième Représentation de Mercadet* one Alberic Second finds an Agatian apotheosis for Balzac's great gambler : “ De Trailles n'habite plus Paris. Ce condottiere retraité est marié, père de famille, réside en province, prononce des discours dans les comices agricoles, améliore les races ovine, bovine et chevaline . . . ” I find it odd that Maxime should discover safety at the horse-shows, where, everybody tells me, my ruin began ! I realise, of course, that in addition to current income tax there are still the stud bills, the money-lenders, and the bank to be settled with. I suppose, after paying £200 a month all this year, I now owe round about £2800.

*July 13* Time is money. What is not so generally recognised is that motor-cars are time. Have swopped my rabbit-hutch for a Hillman 14.

*July 14* The idea occurred to me to-day of compiling a *Friday. Handbook for Hypochondriacs*. Here are the first two entries :

Make it an invariable and obligatory law to yourself, never to mention your own mental diseases ; if you are never to speak of them, you will think on them but little, and if you think little of them, they will molest you rarely. When you talk of them, it is plain that you want either praise or pity ; for praise there is no room, and pity will do you no good ; therefore, from this hour speak no more, think no more, about them.

*Letter from Johnson to Boswell, April 8, 1780*

If health is gone, and gone for ever, we will act as Zachary Pearce the famous bishop of Rochester did, when he lost the wife he loved so—call for one glass to the health of her who is departed, never more to return—and so go quietly back to the usual duties of life, and forbear to mention her again from that time till the last day of it.

*Letter from Mrs Thrale to Johnson, Nov. 2, 1781*

*July 15* Magnificent finish to the Eton and Harrow match, *Saturday*. the plebeians winning for the first time since 1908. I adore, as they say, these matches, and for lots of reasons. The sumptuously appareled crowd. The superb indifference to the cricket—the mob is thickest *behind the stands*, where nothing of the game can be seen or heard. The snatches of conversation : “The worst of a funeral is that one never meets anybody one wants to !” The utter snobishness of it all.

*July 17* From A. J. A. Symons :  
*Monday.*

*Brick House  
Finchingfield  
July 16, '39*

DEAR EGOMET,

... As to visiting you and being visited by you, let us sign a treaty in advance setting off (as the bankers say) musical-boxes against horse-boxes. It is quite clear from *Ego* and other sources that you possess an instructed musical sensibility. I do not. My knowledge of music is confined to these Victorian curiosities and their repertory of operatic hackneys (if you will allow the jest) and popular (or once-popular) airs; *Libiamo* will do as an example of the first kind, *The Plough Boy* represents the second. I claim this much for the *boîte à musique*, that it is an instrument, as is the violin or the piano or the flute, and not a reproducer, as is the gramophone, the telephone, or the radio. A musical-box plays a special, peculiar-to-itself rendering of the tunes in its programme (by means of its specially tuned steel comb); and it makes an ‘intriguing’ (there; I’ve written it for you !) contribution to the range of musical sounds. But I promise in advance not to show you more

than eighty when you come (I have a hundred and eighteen); and even that number shall be reduced to eight if I observe any sign of you being reduced to . . . you know.

As for horses; or, rather, HORSES, you will be ixxxxxxxd to learn that were it not for them

I should not now be sorrow's heritor,<sup>1</sup>  
Nor stand a lackey in the house of pain;<sup>2</sup>

that is to say, I should not now be broke. But all this, and the story of John Gielgud's tennis court, and countless trifles of the kind, will vouchsafe themselves more naturally when wine, not ink, is the vehicle of our communication. All next week I shall be away or busy; but during it I shall invite myself, for the following week, to lunch with you if I stay in London, or invite you and Jock here if I stay down.

The more I read *Ego*, the more I like Brother Edward. No, not because I was born in Clapham.

Yours (I think I may say) assiduously,  
A. J.

<sup>1</sup> Yes, Oscar.

<sup>2</sup> Yes, bad, but pleasantly pompous.

*July 20* I like women to write femininely and cattily. *Thursday.* They embarrass me when they magnperate and magniloquise. They may think they are bending the bow of Ulysses, but the bow I visualise is that wielded by Gilbert's Lady Jane. This is one of the reasons why I was so bored with Dorothy Sayers's *The Devil to Pay* at His Majesty's. Another reason, perhaps, was that la Sayers doesn't play fair. In her preface she pretends to "offer a new presentment of Faustus." Very well, then, why not let it be a new presentment, all about a modern bargain made by a modern Faust? Show me a Ralph Richardson conjuring up not Helen but la Dietrich. Show him arguing, not with the Pope, but with some Bloomsbury intellectual in an atmosphere of thick-lipped saxophones and dark-skinned ukuleles. The modern dramatist who wants to interest me in Faust must show him exhausting the world of *modern* sensation and getting out of it nothing except weariness and satiety. In other words, paying the price of his bargain while he is still enjoying it. This, of course, is the only time he can pay it, since there

is no hell in the mediæval sense, and Miss Sayers knows there isn't, and I know there isn't, and nursery rhymes about it are *vieux jeu* anyhow! And all la Sayers can do is to jolt me back to Wittenberg and attempt to convert me to mysticism by force of argument.

*July 25* *Nouveaux Contes Scabreux*, No. 7. This is a tale *Tuesday*. of a rosy-cheeked schoolboy who turns his head to the master flogging him and winningly remarks, "Excuse me, sir, but this is pleasing me more than it is hurting you!"

*July 26* Lunched at the Ivy with Symons, who told me *Wednesday*. all about his new book. Is anybody interested in the four million pounds made by Lady Oxford's grandfather? Garn! I gathered that

- (a) The man who could write "With rue my heart is laden" was no poet.
- (b) Browning's entire intellectual content is summed up in "My digestion's working to-day; therefore God's in His heaven."
- (c) Lack of money preventing J.A. from disbursing charitable sums, he exercises that virtue by being unnecessarily kind to la Sayers, la Dodie Smith, and le Morgan.

*July 28* Not a single paper that I have seen has given any *Friday*. hint of the quiddity of Morton Selten, the admirable actor who died yesterday at the age of seventy-nine. He was the embodiment of the *vieux marcheur*, frock-coated, over-cuffed, Edwardian, the Minotaur past functioning, the small spark in the old lecher's body about which nothing continues to live except the eye. He was very fond of music, and as recently as two years ago would stand in the crowd throughout a Promenade Concert. Until I saw the announcement in the *Times* I did not know that he lived twelve doors from me. Had I known this I must have found occasion to pay my respects, for I admired him very much.

Aug. 8 *Nouveaux Contes Scabreux*, No. 8. About a young Tuesday. man who suffers from an incurable disease contracted in Paris.

Aug. 9 Jock has given me the *Dramatic Essays* of Wednesday. Leigh Hunt, inscribed :

To the stressed James  
from the jaded Jock  
in the high wet summer  
of 1939

Apropos, I was telling Jock the other day how, though desperately craving it, I would not allow my tailor to make me a purple velvet bridge-jacket for the negligible sum of thirty-six guineas. "This," said I, "proves that I am not a spendthrift on the grand scale." Jock said, "Your mistake is to think ye're a giant like Balzac. Ye're a small-size Leigh Hunt."

Aug. 10 Two letters with a Scotch atmosphere :  
Thursday.

160 *Goldhurst Terrace*  
*Hampstead, N.W.6*  
*August 2nd, 1939*

DEAR MR JAMES AGATE,

Armed with a carefully chosen bag of books I recently sought a peaceful holiday amidst the heather and inclemencies of Scotland, and whilst in Aberdeen met a braw Scots farmer who had come in from the wilds of Sutherlandshire for the Agriculture Show. He was a weatherbeaten sixty, with transparent ears, a craggy cranium, and a perpetual expression of gloom which would have delighted the heart of Charles Dickens.

Conversation was difficult (due no doubt to my inability to appreciate the beauties of ploughs and mechanical milkmaids when ankle-deep in glutinous Scots mud), until he espied the book beneath my arm.

HE (*accusingly*). Ye're r-r-reading a boooooook.

ME (*with immense superiority*). Ego 3. James Agate.

HE (*almost smiling*). James Agate ! Och aye !!  
Weeeeeel !!!

From then on I had but to listen. I learned that *Ego 1*, *Ego 2*, and *Ego 3* are prized literary possessions of that braw Scot, and that he and his wife are looking forward to the publication of *Ego 4*. You are regarded, it seems, as a Gr-r-r-and Authority on ponies, and God allows the wickedness of the London Theatre to exist for the express reason of affording you a livelihood.

I also learned that Jock is a disgrace to the Scots race. This because of (a) a certain postcard sent by him to you from Holland, and (b) his favourite picture. The fact that he is a dramatic critic of repute is of no consequence; that he possesses a first-class literary mind occasions no surprise. Oh, Robbie Burns!

“ . . . my new house—No. 10 Fairfax Road, South Hampstead . . . ” I hated, abominated, and despised lower Hampstead for years—but now it is beloved. Since returning to London I have been unable to pass the door of No. 10 (what an appropriate number! Downing Street is now secondary) without feeling faintly ill, and although the magnitude of the awe has now subsided a little, the fact that I buy my potatoes at the shop where your myrmidons probably buy yours still deprives me of desire for food. Please don’t leave Hampstead yet—I shall be such a lonely, lonely Gentile.

Yours sincerely,  
RICHARD MAINWARING

P.S. If I visit Sutherlandshire during the years to come I shall avoid my braw Scottie. No doubt the awfu’ tenor of some of your remarks will eventually penetrate that craggy cranium, and our mateyness will be relegated to eternal perdition.

And this from young Galt :

Greenock  
August 3rd, 1939

DEAR JAMES,

Your criticism makes me want to *paint*. I confess I was “playing with Manet.” But Manet had live models—I have hazy ones in my mind’s eye. My “Pissarro-like effort” was perfectly genuine. Please don’t think, or worry over, the idea that you may have torpedoed my ambitions; I can

honestly say you have encouraged them. I have a nut to crack, and I won't be happy until I paint your mantelpiece picture.

New resolutions: (1) To draw from life as much as possible. (2) To forget I am a school-teacher and remember that I am a painter.

I am a Scot. Jock will tell you all about Scotsmen.

I cannot forgive you for your letter, but I can thank you for the best criticism I have had for years.

I have just had a very happy time hiking in the Scottish Highlands. First day out was lost on top of a mountain, but the scenery was amazing and worth the trouble. Thought I was going to die afterwards when I could not find the hostel in the dark. The crofters are very kind people and very simple. The main topic seems to be food. If you ever suffer from loss of appetite try the North—you are sure of a cure in a day.

At Ullapool I met a Dutch girl who had been hiking all the way from the South of England. She told me that she did not walk more than a mile a day: "I just zit at ze side of de road and hold my head and wave my arms, and when a beeg car comes along wiv de reech man I ask for de lift. I do not like de lorries or de little cars, only de beeg cars."

Since I came home I have been cook and housekeeper rolled into one, painting at intervals during the day. I have another week to spend doing the same act, although my technique is gradually getting worse. I am tempted to under-do a steak and over-decorate puddings.

I must stop writing because I have suddenly remembered I must visit my barber this afternoon. He has an excellent radio, and I enjoy the free entertainment. Here my Scotch half defeats my English half.

Yours sincerely,

ALEX GALT

*Aug. 13* "One can be bored until boredom becomes a *Sunday*. mystical experience," wrote Logan Pearsall Smith.

This means that I have just come back from Malvern. Five dud plays which no London manager in his senses would look at, and then what may turn out to be a valedictory Shaw. I had to write a column notice of the last, which is a

noble piece of work, sitting on my suitcase in the corridor of a train crowded with returning holiday-makers.

When I got home I found a table stacked with bills and letters all apparently asking me to read this play, that novel, etc., etc. I was about to sweep the whole lot into the waste-paper-basket when a letter in a cultivated handwriting caught my eye. The writer asked me to accept a photograph of Aimée Desclée and two letters by her, the longer of which was written to my correspondent's mother. Here they are:

[*No address or date*]

CHER MONSIEUR,

Les soi-disant femmes sérieuses ont des étourderies incroyables : j'ai oublié de demander l'adresse des personnes qui m'ont si adorably reçue hier, et je dois y retourner demain matin, mardi.

Vite, un mot je vous prie, car je ne voudrais pas manquer ce rendez-vous, ce serait mal reconnaître une si parfaite réception.

Recevez en passant, cher monsieur, l'assurance de mes meilleurs sentimens.

A. DESCLÉE

[*No address or date*]

Hélas ! ma chère madame, je paraîtrais ingrate si je tardais plus longtemps à vous répondre et je n'ai rien que de triste à vous dire. Après avoir tant travaillé, tant lutté, tant souffert, seule n'ayant de la famille que les charges, après avoir dépensé ce qu'il faut d'énergie et de courage pour soulever un monde, j'étais arrivé à une situation honorable, je gagnais ma vie, je pouvais venir en aide à mes vieux parens, je voyais ma vieillesse assurée et tranquille, tout s'écroule en ce moment, tout se trouve entravé par la maladie.

Depuis trois mois, le mal ne fait qu'augmenter, et les médecins me disent que je pourrai vivre longtemps, mais que je serai impotente et que je devrai quitter le théâtre. Dans ces conditions, est-ce un crime de désirer mourir ?

Je cherche un chirurgien qui consente à m'opérer. Une opération terrible et effrayante, mais qui de toute façon m'apportera la délivrance. Si elle réussit, j'aurai la santé ;

si elle ne réussit pas, je serai à tout jamais délivrée de mes maux. Comprenez-vous, ma chère madame, pourquoi je tardais toujours à vous répondre? Vous m'avez témoigné tant d'intérêt que je dois vous faire de la peine. Le mal dont je souffre est une tumeur fibreuse. Votre docteur pourra vous expliquer ce mal étrange qui est plus une infirmité qu'une maladie.

Serrez-vous bien fort contre vos père, mari, frère, enfans, serrez-vous contre tous ceux qui vous aiment et que vous aimez; jouissez en paix des joies, des bonheurs que la Providence vous envoie, et priez-la pour cette pauvre déshéritée, peut-être les prières d'un adorable cœur comme le vôtre seront elles entendues!

A. DESCLÉE

The postmark on the envelope is November 1873. Desclée died in the following March. She was thirty-seven.

*Aug. 14* Spent most of the day packing in readiness for my *Monday*. holiday of three weeks. This means twenty-one days away from the *S.T.*, though I must still write two articles a week for the *Express*, one for the *Tatler*, one for *John o' London's*, one for *Shopping News*, and one for something called *Housewife*. Fifteen articles in all, plus a new book I am supposed to deliver by the end of this month. I have chosen Southend for this debauch of idleness because it repairs the Agatian fabric more quickly than any other place, because it does this at seven guineas a week, and because I am more at home at the big writing-desk facing the statue of Queen Victoria, which Wyndham Lewis (the witty one) says is meant for me, than anywhere else in the world. Leo Pavia is the minister in attendance. I find his venom better than any tonic.

*Aug. 15* Annoyed to find the writing-desk monopolised by *Tuesday*. a lady in a wheeled chair and a gentleman with a club-foot. They look too *settled* for my taste. So I have had a large desk put into the window of the hotel's best and largest bedroom. *Nine* guineas, and worth it. Among the books I have brought with me is *Henry Arthur*

Jones's *The Shadow of Henry Irving*, given me by his daughter, Doris Thorne. The hundred-odd unfinished pages written in 1912-13 give the best portrait of Irving that I know. H.A.J. alone insists sufficiently on the "sly impishness, the laconic mockery and grim diablerie that were the underwoof of the character." He describes his Dubosc, which Ellen Terry underrated, as "awful and gleeful," the second being the operative word. His Shylock "smote and shrivelled Gratiano into bottomless contempt, like one who should be caught playing the fool at the Day of Judgment."

And now, on the subject of Irving as formerly of Sarah, I am sworn to an Iago-like silence: "From this time forth I never will speak word."

Aug. 16            A letter :  
Wednesday.

22, Irby Road  
Anfield, Liverpool 4

DEAR MR AGATE,

I have in my possession a walking-stick, the one-time property of that grand old man W. E. Gladstone. I thought you might be interested. I used to have an axe belonging to the said G.O.M. Unfortunately the said axe in the course of time has acquired two or three new blades and several new handles. Which renders its value as a curio absolutely nil. But as a demolisher of crates, orange-boxes, and unwanted furniture it performs equally well as did its famous predecessor in the line of yew-trees, beech-trees, and cherry-trees.

The authenticity of the walking-stick can be vouched for by my father, whose forbears did decorating work at the castle, and blessed the squire and his relations. Which to me savours of sycophancy, for I'll have you know, sir, that the Colecloughs are Freemen of Chester. Methinks some Royalist grandsire defended the city breweries when Cromwell went on the ramp. Maybe the stick was intended as a family heirloom, but as I'm totally uninterested in what the G.O.M. said in '84 or performed in '92, the stick to me is simply a piece of wood.

As all my efforts at collecting anything appertaining to antiques are frustrated, and the bits of lumber are

relegated to the bin, I propose, provided you are interested—and, after all, remember what the G.O.M. did for England, Ireland, the Parish, and himself—to send this antique, curio, relic, or whatever you will to you, if you will kindly let me know the address.

Yours sincerely,

A. COLECLOUGH

Aug. 18 From Brother Edward :

Friday.

DEAR JIM,

Mr Moiseiwitsch apart, and the pretty little incident of his playing one of my piano pieces which will fill up an untidy gap in your next *Ego*, I would have you know that to me they are not toys but part of my being—such as they are and such as I am. They are to me more personal even than your books are to you, for the question of money to be made by them does not enter into my calculation. I tell you this, as I foresee a snigger ahead. But I continue writing one a day, so that the black sheep of the family will not depart this life trackless! About a month ago I played eighteen of the Preludes to Gustave (the most musical of mortals) and made him snivel. That takes some doing with Brother Mycroft. But enough of this.

E. A.

Aug. 20 Appalling heat. Breakfast in room. Read the *Sunday* papers. According to the *Observer*, the crisis is on again, and worse than ever. According to the *Sunday Times*, nothing much is happening. According to the *Sunday Express*, a great deal is happening, and all of it favourable to Britain. Danzig, of course.

Afternoon. Lunched in room and wrote twelve business letters.

Evening. Wrote twelve more business letters, including long financial screed to the man Chenhalls. Shaved, dressed, and went downstairs at 10 P.M. At dinner Leo said, "Times have changed, James, and you with them. When I first knew you in 1921 your motto was 'In the beginning was the word.' Now it appears to be 'In the end is the cheque.' "

Aug. 21 Worked all morning and afternoon at book article *Monday*. At six o'clock set out for Burnham-on-Crouch to pay my respects to Fred Winsor, the young golf-pro. with whom my matches in 1935 are fascinatingly (boringly?) described in *Ego 2*. I have hardly had a golf-club in my hand for two years, and certainly the last full round I played was at Lytham in 1937, though I had a few holes at Lowestoft last year. Incidentally, the doctors have rather put me off golf—"three or four holes if you really feel like it"—though this has not been the reason for my desisting. To-day I contented myself with twenty-four shots with Winsor's No. 2 iron and mashie—my own clubs have been left behind—of which seven were as good as I have ever played. No ill results except a touch of asthma, which I suspect was coming on anyhow.

I asked Leo later what had been the best things in his life. He said, "Theatres, concerts, and good talks in pre-War London, Berlin, and Vienna." I said that that was going too far back, and that the best post-War things in my life had been evenings at the Old Vic, long days with Albert Throup and the horses, and my games of golf with Winsor. Frédéric Moreau, the hero of Flaubert's *L'Education Sentimentale*, and his friend Deslauriers thought that the *maison* of one Zoraïde Turc was "ce que nous avons eu de meilleur." I hold the opposite view. The things I have stated are the best I have known in life for the reason that, while they were happening, *la sotte et criminelle sensualité a lâché prise*. For at heart I am a puritan. "La débauche veut des âmes fortes," said Balzac, and I am that craven thing—the sensualist with qualms. Much braver to say with Gerald Gould :

For God's sake, if you sin, take pleasure in it,  
And do it for the pleasure. Do not say :  
"Behold the spirit's liberty!—a minute  
Will see the earthly vesture break away  
And God shine through." Say : "Here's a  
sin—I'll sin it;  
And there's the price of sinning—and I'll pay."

Aug. 22 Bombshell ! Germany announces a non-aggression *Tuesday*. pact with Russia.

Aug. 24 Postcard from Brother Edward :  
Thursday.

Obtained my gas-mask this morning and never thought I could perpetrate such a vulgarity. Cumbersome? Doubtless; but useful for the evasion of creditors. I can now tread Tooting Bec Common immune from the pursuit of infuriated publicans for 'that half-crown,' unless my moth-eaten garments betray me! I was in Surrey last week-end. The cows in the fields were still complacent, and coughed and calved as usual.

Aug. 26 Lunched at Frinton, which I have never forgiven Saturday. for its refusal in 1914 and subsequently to allow wounded soldiers along its front. Actually I was trying to reach Felixstowe, but was held up by long stretches of the half-made London-Yarmouth road, which, if this had been Germany, would have been finished long ago. No signs of military activity except one brass-hat who nearly exploded when George did not give his car as much room as his air-mightiness demanded.

I have not the least idea what I shall do if war comes. I plan to continue this diary as long as possible, for which purpose I have laid in manuscript paper for a year. The idea is to remain in England. Otherwise I should remind the War Office that its System of Accountancy for the Purchase of Forage for Army Horses Abroad in Time of War was invented by me at Arles, Bouches-du-Rhône, France, in 1916, and that they gave me a captaincy for it.

Aug. 28 I gather that we shall win the war even if within a Monday. week from the firing of the first shot St Paul's Cathedral is a heap of rubble and nobody can tell where Piccadilly Circus was. Have decided to cut my holiday short and return to London on Wednesday morning. Of all the days I have ever spent at Southend this is the fairest. Blazing sun, a spot of wind, the sea a blue mirror with myriads of little boats as in a canvas by Canaletto. Working at my window I hear the cries of the children below.

John Glennon has come down to replace Leo. After the wireless closes down he and I spend an hour on the balcony looking out over the estuary. Presently an enormous liner with all her portholes ablaze comes at great speed down the river. Then the ripple caused by her wash, and after that stillness. At 1 A.M. decide to return home, where we arrive around 3 A.M. Entirely uneventful journey throughout which we meet at most ten cars. No troop movements, no search-lights, no aeroplanes. A cloudy night and a perfect moon which, knowing her Alfred Douglas, wins to one empty space after another.

*Aug. 30* The *Daily Mail* correspondent tells me at lunch *Wednesday*. that the Polish plan is to entice the Germans well into Poland. The rains are due about the middle of September, when the roads become impassable for heavy mechanical transport. Whereupon the Polish cavalry, over a million strong, is to fall on the waterlogged Germans. I do not know that I altogether believe this.

*Aug. 31* Succeeded, after something of a scene, in per-  
*Thursday*. suading Brother Edward to go to York, where Brother Harry will look after him and try to get him a job. Edward looked an old, very worn, and even sick man, and talked a great deal about failures being the best kind of bomb-fodder. However, I got him off, his last message being a slip of paper handed out of the carriage window with the words "Evacuating a genius at the cost of a £2 railway ticket is what I call reasonable!" He had previously presented me with the following:

#### LAST THOUGHTS IN PEACE-TIME

"Of all my numerous disciples, only one has ever understood me, and even he understood me falsely."—Hegel.

"I have observed very few who had not some employment; for the man who spends his time at the dice, or in playing the buffoon, may be said to do something."—Not Dr Johnson, but—Socrates!

“ The other day I met a horse, with a crowd of people about him admiring his good qualities, and praising his strength and spirit. So I enquired of the owner of the horse : Is your horse very rich ? ”—Xenophon’s *Economics*.

Here let me record that my last indulgence before the inevitable was to interrupt making all fast at the Villa Volpone and go down to Queen’s Hall to listen to *Ein Heldenleben*. I arrived in time for the opening bars, and left immediately after the piece. The effect of the music, plus the situation, was overwhelming.

*Sept. 1* Shortly before six o’clock this morning Germany *Friday*. invaded Poland and bombed ten of her principal cities. At 6 p.m. Chamberlain issued an ultimatum to Germany to the effect that if she does not immediately withdraw her troops from Poland the British Ambassador will ask for his passport.

*Sept. 2* The mobilisation of the Army and Navy is now *Saturday*. completed. If England is not at war it is, as Barrie’s Cinderella said about the policeman’s love-letter, “ a very near thing.” Reasonable time has to be allowed for the reply to Chamberlain’s ultimatum, and then we’re off ! To-day’s *Times* ends its second leader with the sentence : “ The task [of ridding the world of military bullying] will be done again, no matter what the effort required ; and it will be done this time in a way which will ensure that our children will not have to repeat it.” But that’s equivocal. Does the writer mean *no* second Versailles Treaty, or a stiffer and sterner one to which what is left of Germany will be held ? I wonder what the shades of Clemenceau and Foch are thinking. Some say zero hour is fixed for noon to-day ; others that it will not be till Monday.

3 p.m. Nothing yet. I hear that we are waiting for the evacuation of the children to be completed. No excitement. No flag-waving. Only, last night in the pubs, all the old war-songs except *Tipperary*. Warner Allen, who has got an undefined commission in the Air Force, told

me that he came up from Reading this morning in just over four hours. By the way, the 'brass hat' mentality has not changed. "Do you know how to wear war uniform?" Brass Hat asked Warner, who goggled. "I mean," went on Brass Hat, "do you think you would feel at home in an officers' mess?" Warner, who was an officer in the last war and is one of the greatest living connoisseurs of wine, said he could at least try to feel at home in uniform and in the mess, and upon this was, rather doubtfully, passed. By the way, Jock, who supped last night with John Gielgud and Ralph Richardson, asked me to guess what was the one thing the actor who goes to the front decides shall not perish. His *bibelots* and bric-à-brac, his Matthew Smiths and his porcelain, all these may go up in smoke—excuse the war-time metaphor! —but not his uniquely valuable possession, his book of old Press notices!

Benny Bennett, a little hoofer and the dude in a concert party we fell in with during the holiday, called on me to-day on his way home to Bristol. Said the last he saw of Southend was his top-hat—the one he wore in the number "This is the Life"—careering seawards. He had thrown it over the pier railings and watched it bob up and down till the tide carried it out of sight.



# WAR

*What follows is a record of how I lived, thought, and felt between September 3rd, 1989, and June 17th, 1940. It may be that I ought to have lived, thought, and felt differently. But I did not.*

**J. A.**



## WAR

Sept. 3  
Sunday.

The night has been unruly; where we lay,  
Our chimneys were blown down : and, as they say,  
Lamentings heard i' the air, strange screams of death;  
And prophesying, with accents terrible,  
Of dire combustion and confus'd events,  
New hatch'd to the woeful time.

*Macbeth*

The Prime Minister's speech in the House last night was accompanied by tremendous lightning, but hardly any thunder. It was more like stage lightning than the real thing. I watched the storm from the Savage Club. One moment complete darkness ; the next a sheet of vivid green showing Westminster cut out in cardboard like the scenery in a toy theatre. The flashes lasted so long that you could count the buildings.

At ten o'clock to-day Hibberd, the chief announcer, told us that the Prime Minister would broadcast at eleven o'clock. Nothing can perturb Hibberd, but I fancied his voice struck a note unused since the death of George V. Next the country gave itself up to light music for an hour, ending with a "Selection from *Princess Ida*"! And then, at 11.15 precisely, the solemn tones of the P.M. Speaking with an intensely English accent, unassailable dignity, and legitimate emotion, Chamberlain told us that, since Germany had not replied to the ultimatum, England was now at war.

At half-past eleven the first air-raid warning goes. Orderly retreat to dug-out. Nothing happens. "All clear" after half an hour. We go into the street, and I see a man look at his watch and hear him say, "They're open!"

Presently Jock comes round in search of his gas-mask, and tells me two things. (1) That the Irish navvies in Camden

Town refuse to leave London though Eire has declared herself neutral. One of them said to him, "Oi don't mind dying for Ireland, but Oi won't live in it!" (2) That this morning's air-raid sirens caught him at breakfast in the Strand Corner House, and drove him into the basement. He adjures me to say that his first and chief emotion took the form of the angry exclamation, "What a *very* unattractive crowd of people to have to die with!" This sets Jock down, in his own words to me, as a ceaseless, remorseless, and hopeless voluptuary! He openly declares that he now lives, and is quite willing to die, with this view of himself. He adds that the operative word in this last testament is "quite."

Well, Jock can say of himself what he likes. I know, and put on record here, that the first day I set eyes on him I recognised the strange beauty of his mind and spirit, and that I have not been deceived, or ever thought I could be. He has been my friend and counsellor, pupil and sometimes mentor; and never does, nor can, his wit run dry.

6.0 P.M. The King broadcasts a "message to his people." This is obviously a great strain, and he comes through it nobly.

8.0 P.M. The setting sun turns the barrage balloons to golden asteroids. Jock quarrels with my choice of colour and says it should be *rolled* gold.

12.0 P.M. So far as I can judge in my suburb, which I have not left to-day, the people are taking the war with extraordinary calmness. In one matter I confess that I have been utterly wrong. I expected every road leading out of London to be cluttered up and impassable. Actually, not only has there been no exodus, but the traffic has been less than on an ordinary Sunday.

Fred Leigh is a mountain of comfort. He has produced an unexpected round of beef. Also two beds, which I did not know I possessed. He has set these up in our big 'garden-room,' which sounds so much better than 'back basement.' The idea is to take it in turns to sleep, as neither of us wakes easily, and we don't know yet whether we should hear the sirens. The B.B.C. has been exemplary all day, dispensing

music not too heavy and not too light. Homely stuff, with many familiar airs and ballads, things like *Sally in our Alley*, which at this juncture are strangely moving. The telephone too has been on its best behaviour.

4 a.m. I had just written the above when, round about three o'clock, the second air-raid warning sounded. It was my watch; indeed, I had not gone to bed. I woke Fred, and we made an orderly trek to the dug-out. Stayed there an hour and a half.

*Sept. 4* An item which would once have excited me: the *Monday*. sudden death of Nigel Colman's great horse *Spotlight*.

*Sept. 5* Notice at the top of my road: "Come and Help *Tuesday*. to Load Sandbags with Margate Sand."

Ralph Baker has joined the R.A.M.C. with two pips. His flat closing down, I went round to collect the books he had from me on loan. Jock says I only needed a perambulator to look exactly like O'Casey's Bessie Burgess! The Camden Town jeweller from whom I bought a cheap wrist-watch told me that he had sold thirty wedding-rings in two days, as against the normal three or four. A poor woman coming in to buy a modest signet ring and asking to have "From your Loving Wife" engraved on it was told that no engravers were available. At the chemist's a well-dressed woman demanded a slimming preparation. How's that for the eternal feminine? One of the most depressed men in London to-day was the shop-keeper at Chalk Farm whose line is flares, beacons, and material for bonfires.

*Sept. 6* Sirens went at 6.50 this morning. Woke me, but *Wednesday*. not Fred. We have given up the watch business, and snore in unison; what the banks call collateral security. In the dug-out read Noel Coward's new book of extremely witty short stories. When I came to "There was a signed photograph of Sarah Bernhardt looking like a sheep in white lace" I found I had forgotten about the air

raid. Hearing nothing whatever, we emerged at 7.50 into a perfect September morning. Hung about, chatting to wardens, patting the milkman's pony, and so on, until 9.20, when the 'all clear' sounded. Discussion in Parliament yesterday about the difficulty of distinguishing between this and the alarm signal; what song the sirens are singing has become a matter of practical politics. *Daily Express* boy, arriving with my proof round about midday, informs me that we brought down a German 'plane at either Walthamstow or Wolverhampton—he doesn't seem to mind which. Hornchurch and Chatham are fancied a great deal, and my charwoman absolute for Bloomsbury. Learned later that nothing was brought down except, by mistake, one of our own 'planes.

I used to agree with Hazlitt's "Egotism is an infirmity that perpetually grows upon a man, till at last he cannot bear to think of anything but himself, or even to suppose that others do." In war-time this does not hold. I realise that I have become a person of no distinction, and it is this which I find disconcerting. *Per contra*, all sorts of people one had regarded as amiable noodles now turn out to be of immense importance. They burst upon the club in uniform and hold forth where they used to listen. I feel like Kipling's Eustace Cleever, "decorator and colour-man in words," who found himself abashed in the company of young men of action.

*Sept. 7* Anatole France, in one of his novels, refers to a *Thursday*, satirical drawing made by Gustave Doré during the Crimean War. This shows a monk writing in his cell while all around him is carnage. The monastery is on the verge of collapse, and in the doorway of the monk's precariously poised cell a hand-to-hand fight is going on. In the midst of all this the monk, whose name I suspect to be Brother Edward, still keeps his nose in his manuscript and continues to write. France has the comment: "Voilà ce que c'est que de vivre dans les bouquins! Voilà le pouvoir des paperasses!" What I want to know is what else the monk should have done. I propose to glue my nose to *Ego* as long as I and it have sticking power.

Sept. 8 The evenings and the long closetings at the Villa Friday. Volpone proving *tant soit peu énervants*, the fact that I get no news, and Fred having developed a snore like the air-raid warble, I have decided to move to the Savage Club. My reaction to air raids is curiously like Spintho's reaction to martyrdom in Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion*: I am prepared to go through with them provided they happen on a day when my nerves are in good order. My offer to send Fred to join his family at Welshpool is indignantly refused. I may want to come back to the Villa, he is not going to desert me, and having built the dug-out he intends to enjoy it. All this is conveyed with a moon-faced inflexibility which suggests Jay Laurier in the rôle of Cato.

Sept. 9 A jorum of presents from Jock in honour of my Saturday. sixty-second birthday. Two gramophone records of Scriabin's early piano pieces. Also a copy of Ristori's *Memoirs*. My mother, when she was carrying me, was taken by my father to see Ristori in Paolo Giacometti's *Queen Elizabeth*. This excited her so much that I very nearly miscarried! Gummed into the book are a number of old newspaper cuttings, among which I find an account of the great Italian actress's assault on Paris in 1855. The first appearance was unsensational. At the second, for which she chose Alfieri's *Myrrha*, the result is described as "electrifying," a word which in those days meant something. The audience included Alexandre Dumas, Jules Janin, Scribe, and Théophile Gautier. Next she seems to have appeared in the *Medea* of Ernest Legouvé, Scribe's collaborator in *Adrienne Lecouvreur*. Legouvé was moved to write of the new actress, "Tall, of magnificent proportions, chestnut hair: I was immediately struck by the sovereign beauty of her eyes. What eyes! I have seen their equal only in Talma and in *Malibran*!" Italics mine. Odd how the name insists on cropping up anywhere and everywhere.

Last and most treasurable among Jock's presents is this cutting from the *Manchester Guardian*. The date is September 8th, 1914.

Since the war began we have seen some plays that could not live with it. It found them out, as sunlight finds out rouge ; one felt that, in trying to give oneself up to them, one was abetting a kind of futility, helping to make believe that anything else could matter while history, real and hard, could almost be heard outside, galloping through the night. But *Twelfth Night* has nothing to fear. . . .

Even Armageddons are only means, and the joy of such treasures as these is an end ; though the nations fight for a generation, it is to these that they will turn back in hunger at last, as they will turn to hills and the sea. Whatever else falls in this season of shaken assumptions and rearranged thoughts, the hold of great art on the mind will not give ; it will last as long as the "true and virtuous soul" that, "though the whole world turns to coal, Then chiefly lives." So it was well that Miss Horniman opened her autumn's work last night with this specimen of the undefeatable, inextinguishable treasures beside which even a 42-centimetre Krupp gun is but as a fashion in hats. Peace, when it comes, would be worth so much the less to the returning soldier and every one else if the artists were only to sit down now and sigh for it.

C. E. M.

*Sept. 10* Any port in a storm, and, I suppose, any panacea *Sunday*. in a time of nerves. Harold Dearden is, at the moment, my most fantastic reassurer. Because the earth is a spinning globe from which I may be hurled at any minute, and because I do not worry about this ultimate catastrophe, why worry about "comparatively childish things such as air raids"? I envy the mind that is comforted by this sort of thing.

Bergel tells me to-night of a line in the order to L.C.C. evacuation centres in London : "Expectant mothers must show their pink forms." J.G.B. is a great retailer of anecdotes. He and Basil Cameron invade my room in the early hours and consent to withdraw only on my representing (1) that I am not passionately fond of Sibelius's *Tapiola* at any time, and (2) that I actively dislike it played on an emergency gramophone at three in the morning in war-time.



*Photo Germaine Kahnova*

*Boris Moiseiwitsch with his Father*



Sept. 14 From Mrs Johnstone's Spanish war book *Hotel Thursday. in Flight*: "Little Alfonso, our singing plumber, was a prisoner; Juan, the champion tango dancer, was dead." Butterflies, especially the human sort, should be immune from destruction. Swiftness should not overtake, of all people, the dancer of the languorous, timeless tango.

Rather pleased with a sentence in my review of Eddy Knoblock's *Round my Room*. Confessing lifelong passion for Duse, he says that he once met her in a lift and dared not speak. My note on this is that obviously she was going up while he was coming down.

Moiseiwitsch tells me that his entire season of forty-seven concerts and recitals has been cancelled. I don't understand the behaviour of the B.B.C. with regard to such concerts as they have cancelled. The public pays 10s. a year in the knowledge that part of that amount will be spent on high-class music and executants of high standing. Is the B.B.C. going to refund to the Government .0001d., which is what I pay to hear Moiseiwitsch? Or does it intend to pocket it, while fobbing me off with gramophone records? That the Government, fearing the crowding together of large numbers of people, should ban concerts before an audience is no reason why it should not give them in an empty hall before a microphone.

I had just finished writing a set of verses, entitled *A Soldier's Farewell to his Hobbies*, for my *Daily Express* Saturday Notes when word arrived that these, but not my book reviews, are to be discontinued. This bombshell amounts to £1000 a year. The point now is to see that a proportionate part of the explosion occurs in the pocket of the income-tax collector. I shall pay my revenue and all other debts in time, but I must have time; for many months I have been paying out £200 and sometimes £225 in reduction of my liabilities. I must be able to carry on with my work *without the interruption of bankruptcy*. The difficulty is to get Bush House to see this.

Went to Golder's Green Hippodrome. The piece chosen to re-open the London Theatre is *The Importance of Being Earnest*. O.W.'s shade, remembering how at Reading station

a man publicly spat on the handcuffed prisoner, is probably turning a bitter epigram about this. Here is mine :

VOLTE-FACE

He spat and passed.  
 The pederast  
 Nor bowed, nor shook his head;  
 The world unkind  
 Drew down the blind  
 On one it deemed was dead.

The man who hissed,  
 The moralist,  
 Now laughs to split his side;  
 The world uncertain  
 Rings up the curtain  
 On one who has not died.

*Sept. 16* The *Times* has an excellent article on the theme *Saturday*. of "Sufficient unto the day." "If a man's imagination is active with what may be he will be less able to meet in a resolute and quiet spirit that which is. He will be fighting upon two fronts. . . ."

In other words, ignore the newspaper placards which announce "Stalin keeps us guessing." Personally I shall confine speculation to Mrs Gamp's "Some people may be Roo-shans, and others may be Prooshans, they are born so, and will please themselves." To worry about what Stalin and the income-tax collector are going to do would be to fight on two fronts at once. Arnold Bennett would have registered any fact about his health during a trying period. Let me record that since the middle of August I have lost exactly one stone in weight.

In Piccadilly saw a top-hat, and also a policeman wearing a monocle. Last night *les dames du trottoir* murmuring, "Coming home, dearie?" flashed a pocket torch into the prospective client's face. Better, surely, to flash it into her own? Lunched with Stephen Haggard, George Devine, Peggy Ashcroft, and Sophie Harris, the founder of Motley, the theatre designers. Devine told me that the Islington gangs are very much out of hand. They carry penknives with quarter-inch blades, which maim without doing fatal injury. One gang is said to have raped an old woman of seventy in Upper Street

last night. Another gang of eight members has joined the same A.R.P. anti-fire unit. The idea is that two manipulate the hose while six loot.

Sept. 21 For the past three weeks I have worked at a little *Thursday* table in the window of my bedroom at the Savage Club. The table is rickety, and the window is an abominable affair of two slats. As the glass is painted blue the bottom slat has to be kept raised, which will not be possible in winter. During these last few days of glorious weather I have frequently interrupted my work to gaze at the panorama, the sweep of which begins at the Horse Guards, takes in Downing Street, the Houses of Parliament and the Abbey, and ends with Battersea Power Station and Westminster Cathedral. Is there a dullish stretch between the dome of Lloyds Bank and the Underground offices? Nature and art have provided compensation. For in the foreground a break in the trees gives a glimpse of that lake in St James's Park which I have always associated with Tchekhov's *The Seagull*, perhaps because white birds continually skim its surface. Silvery shrubs fringe the border on this side; on the other is a sloping lawn with a walk and seats. Here, I have found myself thinking, might Konstantin have pondered his play, and Trigórin worked out his neat, pat metaphors. For a fortnight this Tchekhovian composition has been bathed in sunshine; to-day it is clouded over. But I am no believer in the Pathetic Fallacy, and anyhow it was yesterday, perhaps the most radiant day of all, that I saw in a corner of the *Times* that Georges Pitoëff had died. For twenty-five years he has been the prop and mainstay of the French intellectual theatre, doing for Paris what the Vedrenne-Barker management did for London, only over a much longer period. His spirit was kin to Jack Grein's, and if his theatre was more successful than Jack's it was because he was working in a country friendly to art, whereas the English have always been hostile. Pitoëff was a not-very-good actor who always gave me immense pleasure; his features looked as though they had been carved out of some hard, corrugated wood. Discussing this great loss

with an art editor, a theatre designer, and a leading journalist, all at the club, I was profoundly shocked to find that none of them had ever heard of Pitoëff.

Start my "Comfortable Passages from Great Literature" series for the *Express* with Christina Rossetti's *Remember*, and immediately receive two letters. One, from Dulwich, tells me that the writer's husband, now serving in the R.A.F., sent her a copy of C.R.'s poem on the previous day, the anniversary of their wedding. Another writes from Nottingham, "I sit here alone in the house and afraid of the black-out," and goes on, "Here is something that I wrote to-night." And there follows this poem :

And now to think of quiet things,  
 Still springs, dear cool shallow streams,  
 And cats' eyes, contented after milk;  
 Skies of any colour, be they calm,  
 Music of tranquil pattern,  
 And hands that I have seen and loved  
 In movement and repose;  
 Beauty, unclamorous and abiding,  
 Stilled life and meadows,  
 Chilled, romantic winter-evening air;  
 To think of fires and grates and draughts,  
 Of trees and dappled sunlight;  
 Of statuary; of moths;  
 To think of swallows' wings : of England.

Jock may be right in saying that this is Rupert Brooke and water. I think it is pretty good for a woman who is not a professional poet, alone with the jitters at Nottingham.

Listened in to Roosevelt's speech to Congress on the American embargo. I gathered from the applause with which the word 'peace' was received that America is quite content to let European civilisation perish, and that nothing less than a drop in Hollywood's receipts will bring her into the war. Once again Dickens provides the perfect parallel. This is Pecksniff's "There is disinterestedness in the world, I hope? We are not all arrayed in two opposite ranks : the *offensive* and the *defensive*. Some few there are who walk between ; who help the needy as they go ; and take no part with either side. Umph!" Roosevelt umph'd to-night most Pecksniffianly.

Sept. 23 Leo came to lunch. He told me that originally Saturday. *The Importance of Being Earnest* was written in four acts, and was cut down by George Alexander to three. The original third act contained a scene in which Algernon Moncrieff was arrested for debt. When told that he would be taken to Pentonville Algernon said, "Never. If Society thought that I was familiar with so remote a suburb it would decline to know me." Leo said, "I know all about this because from 1906 to 1909 I was the official German translator of Wilde's plays. In this capacity I got to know Baron von Teschenberg, who had a copy of the four-act version. He became a great friend of mine, and swindled me out of five hundred pounds."

Sept. 24 Coming out of the Café Royal into the pitch darkness of Piccadilly Circus, I heard a man playing on a tin whistle the old hymn : "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds." This had a half-eerie, half-emotional effect on the crowd, which was standing still to listen.

Sept. 25 Peter Page dined with me last night at the Café Monday. Royal. Full from seven onwards—the Café, not P.P.—and easily the most cheerful place in town. Wonderful meal for 5s. 6d. *Hors-d'œuvre*, soup, half a lobster, half a partridge, cheese. After dinner joined Ashley Dukes and Martita Hunt, who now wears in each ear three thick wedding-rings welded together. With unusual discretion refrained from telling her that the effect is Bayham-Badgeresque.

Note that the French chose yesterday to hold at the Comédie Française "une matinée poétique à la gloire du génie français." There's *panache* for you !

Sept. 26 To Chelsea Barracks with Gerald Moore, who with Tuesday. Joan Cross, Henry Wendon, and Arthur Fear was entertaining the Scots Guards. I gathered that *Roll out the Barrel* and the old *If You Were the Only Girl in the World, Take Me Back to Dear Old Blighty*, and *Tipperary*

are the popular songs at the moment, and in that order. The *Barrel* song looks like being the new *Tipperary*.

*Sept. 27* Talked to James Bone about the war as it *Wednesday*. affects people who are in arrears with the Revenue. He said, "I remember meeting you in the Cheshire Cheese in August 1914. You were hard at it then, debating the same problem with George Mair." Took Helen Haye to dinner at C.R., and in view of the income-tax rise of 2s. ordered *half* a bottle of the usual. Then drove for a little about London, which in the moonlight had suddenly become pure eighteenth-century.

*Sept. 28* A letter from my jittery poetess :  
*Thursday*.

DEAR MR AGATE,

I was amazed to hear from you. So much so that I rang up my husband and read your letter to him. He said, "Frame it!" I felt so happy that I went and gazed at myself in a mirror. I stared at myself in my brilliant red jumper, and could not believe that I was me. Then I started to grin like a Cheshire cat, then I thought of doing some work, then I thought of not doing some work. Here is a thing that I like and which I wrote perhaps a year ago :

I shall grow old and taste defeat.  
But I have seen that food eaten gives strength.  
And I will chew defeat  
Until I get from it  
What strength it has to give.

But the letter is a long one, and I feel I cannot afford the writer too much encouragement. Am nervous of poetesses of a too, poetically speaking, coming-on disposition.

*Sept. 29* Monty has a theory that in war-time everybody *Friday*. should allow himself half an hour of strict pleasure every day. It may be a rubber of bridge, listening to gramophone records, a talk, a book, a cigar, writing letters. Or even, if you are lucky, receiving letters. Here is an extract from one I got this morning from a woman playwright invited

by an extremely well-known actress, whom I will call Miss Bracegirdle, to discuss production of her play *Double One Club*:

Miss Bracegirdle summoned me to tea and little luke-warm scones. We had a very interesting chat about Miss Bracegirdle's daughter. We also discussed a long-since defunct uncle of Miss Bracegirdle with whom she used to stay when she was a little girl. I nearly wrote 'child,' but anyone meeting Miss Bracegirdle for the first time must know at a glance that *never* has Miss Bracegirdle been anything so crude and ambiguous as a child, but always and under no matter how trying the circumstances she remained a *little girl*.

Fully alive to the tender susceptibilities of even the most unknown of authors, Miss Bracegirdle just *touched*, as lightly as the shadow of a cloud falling on a rose, on the advisability of taking the laughs from the minor characters who wouldn't know what to do with them anyway, poor things, and giving them to One of the Bigger Parts, to some one who *knew*. . . . Miss Bracegirdle didn't want to *make any suggestions*—after all, that was *my department*—but undoubtedly she had a *great deal more experience*. . . . Of course she didn't want to *interfere*—she was quite sure the *author knew*—but if I didn't mind a *suggestion* from an *old hand* . . . it really would make the very charming and *so true* play that I had written more . . . well, just *more* . . . if *some one*—say, just for argument's sake, the *Mother*—had all the laughs.

No Art for Art's sake about me that day, I am ashamed to say, and very falsely I agreed that of course it would be *much*—the italic-habit being catching—better for the Mother to have all the laughs. And I comforted myself for my lack of integrity by the reflection that at any rate the public *would know when to laugh*.

Having written and told me that she "liked my play *very much indeed*—better than any play she had read for a long time," Miss Bracegirdle then decided while at Buxton Hydro, at the *Buxton Hydro*, that she was going to do *Having no Heart, Partner?* instead.

As Shakespeare so very nearly said, come what come may, Time and Miss Bracegirdle run through the roughest day.

Sept. 30 Stanley Rubinstein has worked out a scheme *Saturday*. whereby, if the creditors approve, I am to be allowed the following income,  $x$  being the amount I was receiving before the war. On paper it looks very pretty :

$$\mathcal{L} \frac{x - \frac{x}{5}}{3}$$

All depends upon the Revenue authorities, who seem to regard my frenzied monthly payments all this year of £140—in addition to £60 a month to other creditors—as Lamb tells us the Great Elliston regarded fish : “I never eat but one thing at dinner, [pause] reckoning fish as nothing.” If the Revenue says no to Stanley’s scheme nothing remains but the rotten and, what is worse, time-wasting jaws of bankruptcy. I gather that, roughly speaking, I am some £2200 on the wrong side. Still, that’s an improvement on the deficit of £4000 I began the year with. It was a toss-up whether I should invite Chenhalls or Stanley to act for me, and I decided to see what their reaction was to the sum of minus two thousand pounds. Chenhalls describing the situation as “frankly desperate,” and Stanley calling it “almost rosy,” there was no further question. As a salve to my conscience I am dedicating *The Amazing Theatre* to Chenhalls.

Oct. 3 I found this to-day in a letter from Charles Dickens *Tuesday*. to one W. F. de Cergat :

3rd January, 1855

The absorption of the English mind in the war is, to me, a melancholy thing. Every other subject of popular solicitude and sympathy goes down before it. I fear I clearly see that for years to come domestic reforms are shaken to the root; every miserable red-tapist flourishes war over the head of every protester against his humbug; and everything connected with it is pushed to such an unreasonable extent, that, however kind and necessary it may be in itself, it becomes ridiculous. For all this it is an indubitable fact, I conceive, that Russia MUST be stopped, and that the future peace of the world renders the war imperative upon us.

Oct. 4       Not feeling justified in turning the Savage Club  
*Wednesday.* into an office, I have returned to the Villa  
Volpone.

Oct. 5       Scotland Yard reporting two thefts of important  
*Thursday.* documents from motor-cars left unattended, I  
have arranged with Christiansen to kick up a  
stink about this in the *Express*. A corporal in charge of a  
message and looking into the Dog and Duck on the way to  
deliver it would be court-martialled. I am to ask what disci-  
plinary action is being taken against Civil Servants who drop  
into smart restaurants for lunch and leave documents on the  
seats of unattended cars. One such car was left unattended  
for fourteen hours! In a similar case last week the thieves  
returned the documents to the War Office, saying they were  
out for jewels only. They were the better patriots.

Oct. 9       Gerald Barry gave me this pretty thing, the work,  
*Monday.* he tells me, of Johnny Morton :

#### EPITAPH FOR A PROFITEER

Here lies Kartoffelstein,  
Latterly called Fitzwarren :  
There is some corner of an English field  
That is for ever foreign.

Ran into Evelyn Montague, Philip Jordan, and other war  
correspondents in their smart new uniforms. Announced  
intention of designing, and being first wearer of, uniform for  
peace correspondents!

Oct. 10      Brother Edward sends me this from York :  
*Tuesday.*

“ There are those who can move their ears, one or both,  
as they please : there are those that can move all their hair  
towards their forehead, and back again, and never move  
their heads. There are those that can counterfeit the voices  
of birds and of other men, cunningly : and there are some  
who can break wind backward continuously, that you  
would think they sung.”—St Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*.

Oct. 11 The depressing thing about *Music at Night, Wednesday*. which bored me stiff at Malvern last year and which I had to endure again to-night, is to find Priestley falling into the small-town error of imagining that all smart and successful people are, *au fond* and if they would be honest with themselves, miserable. Take the case of the gossip-writer in this play. I know many gossip-writers, all of whom find writing gossip an admirable way of fulfilling their empty selves. Now Jack cannot see himself as a gossip, unless, of course, it is one of the esoteric variety chattering about Time and Eternity. Therefore nobody can be a gossip and be sincere about it, whence it follows that the *courriériste* in this play must be wearing a mask. Then take the courtesan. It is inconceivable to Jack that a courtesan best expresses herself by being a courtesan. To him an unfortunate is a woman who has been abused. "C'est si facile de nier ce que l'on ne comprend pas!" said Balzac. "If I disapprove of a thing it doesn't exist!" booms Priestley. "My Snoops Linchester and all the rest of the world's Snoopses are good little girls lisping songs of innocence until they meet some nasty millionaire who takes advantage of them." (It never occurs to honest Jack that the Snoops Linchesters spend their entire time, whether appearing to listen to music or anything else, in calculating how much advantage they can reap from being taken advantage of!) Wherefore Snoops turns out to be only Marguerite Gautier all over again—"J'ai rêvé campagne, pureté; je me suis souvenue de mon enfance—on a toujours eu une enfance, quoi que l'on soit devenue"—and must, when she opens her heart to us, babble of green fields and girlhood's buttercups and daisies. As Olivier de Jalin, in Dumas's *Le Demi-monde*, so nearly said: "Il faut arriver de Bradford pour avoir cette idée-là."

Oct. 12 Stanley Rubinstein reports complete success with *Thursday*. all creditors. Horses turned out to grass, car turned in, chauffeur sacked, income taken over, cheque-book exchanged for one marked "Private Account," into which a pittance will be paid every Monday morning.

I feel like a remittance man who has *not* been packed off to Australia.

*Oct. 13* "It was in this year that my uncle began to break *Friday*. in upon the regularity of a clean shirt" (*Tristram Shandy*). To-day for the first time in history I put on yesterday's shirt.

*Oct. 30* Seventeen days of sitting up till four and five in *Monday*. the morning working at my anthology for the Forces, *Speak for England*. Clemence Dane gave me the title; it is the phrase shouted in the House the other day when Arthur Greenwood got up to speak on the declaration of war. After wasting a lot of time and going through agonies of indecision I drew up a set of rules which I then rigidly adhered to :

- (1) War to be background only.
- (2) Connecting thread of anthology to be Rupert Brooke's "the thoughts by England given."
- (3) Anthology must hang together.
- (4) Must be intelligible to average soldier.
- (5) Nothing to bore or depress.
- (6) The note to be R.B.'s sonnet transposed into the key of "If he, *i.e.*, another, should die . . ."

I found snags everywhere. Modern poetry too grim. Sassoon's horrors put him out of the question. I tried hard to have that moving poem of Wilfred Owen with its exquisite concluding line, "And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds." But then there was that first line, "What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?" Hardly encouraging to open the anthology at a poem called *Anthem for Doomed Youth*! Tom Driberg thought the sailors might like Hopkins's *Wreck of the Deutschland*. Just don't see how the average A.B. is going to cope with a rigging full of nuns, or the gushing of a "lush-kept plush-capped sloe mouthed to flesh-burst." The prose selections were just as difficult. I had decided upon Thackeray's magnificent passage in the ninth chapter of *Esmond*

beginning "Why does the stately Muse of History," but had to reject it in view of General Staff's susceptibility in the matter of a C.-in-C. who would steal "a portion out of a starving sentinel's three-farthings." However, I got the anthology done at last, and delivered to the hour.

*Oct. 31* *The Amazing Theatre* published. I think there's *Tuesday*. some wit in it, but I find it amazingly badly written. No inner rhythm, no flow, no muscles under the skin. I told Jock that what I call my style is not style at all, and that my way of writing in disconnected nodules turns the stuff into a heap of rabbit droppings. Jock, with a smile: "Shall we say *unset gems?*"

*Nov. 3* No. 66 in *Johnson's Rambler*, November 3, 1750: *Friday*.

It is almost always the unhappiness of a victorious disputant, to destroy his own authority by claiming too many consequences, or diffusing his proposition to an insensible extent. When we have heated our zeal in a cause, and elated our confidence with success, we are naturally inclined to pursue the same train of reasoning, to establish some collateral truth, to remove some adjacent difficulty, and to take in the whole comprehension of our own system. As a prince in the ardour of acquisition is willing to secure his first conquest by the addition of another, add fortress to fortress, and city to city, till despair and opportunity turn his enemies upon him, and he loses in a moment the glory of a reign.

*Nov. 4* Alexander Gemmell is dead. This means nothing *Saturday*. to the world in general, yet he was easily the most remarkable man I have known. To look at he was in figure like Hogarth's *Simon Fraser, Earl Lovat*, and in features like the bust of Colley Cibber in the National Portrait Gallery. In other words, an Old Master. Here is something I wrote about him fifteen years ago, and which first appeared in *White Horse and Red Lion*. Next I worked it into *Kingdoms for Horses*, and I make no apology for repro-

ducing it here, where there is a chance of perpetuating the memory of a Great Man :

He who has heard Alexander Gemmell uphold the Hackney towards midnight in broad Scots and a hotel smoking-room, his bald, egg-shaped head lustrous and shining, his jowl crimson with good cheer, his sagging paunch borne upon legs sturdy as piers, his whole body seismic with the frenzy of tumbling images—whatever has listened to Alexander Gemmell in such an hour knows what great oratory may be. I regard an impromptu harangue delivered by him in the lounge of the Danum Hotel at Doncaster after the Hackney Show of 1922 as the greatest piece of virtuosity I have known. Sargent's paint, Rosenthal's execution of Liszt's *Twelfth Hungarian Rhapsody*, Covey's back-hand force for the dedans, fade to nothing in comparison. The speech contained a magnificent passage about Arthur Fewson's Ladybird by Lord Derby II, out of a Foundation mare. This exquisite bay-brown possessed the sweetness and quality which only the Lord Derby blood could give to the female line of the breed. Her action was not like the artificial action of to-day; it was perfectly natural and perfectly straight, well-balanced, and, as horsemen say, "plenty of it"; but so regular was it in movement that the mare could have continued all day on the hard road and then have been pulled out to give her best performance in the ring. At a small show in Scotland she had been placed second to some common, hulking brute. Said Gemmell, "It is now thirty or forty years since I saw Ladybird, the queen of the Scottish show-ring, at Auchtermuchty; and surely never lighted on that turf, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her as she entered the ring, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere in which she had just begun to move; glittering like the morning star, full of life, and splendour, and joy. Oh, what a revolution! And what a heart must I have, to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall! Little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters come upon the mare in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of judges and of horsemen. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge a look that threatened to put her down. But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and

calculators has succeeded ; and on that day the glory of the Hackney was extinguished for ever.” These may not have been Gemmell’s exact words ; I will swear that he used Burke’s periods.

Alec spoke for an hour and a quarter, taking for subject himself and his horses. It was not so much a speech as a spate of technical lore intermingled with the humanities. It concluded with the toast “ Gentlemen, Ah gie ye masel’ ! ” Gemmell is compounded of Lauder and Mr Asquith, Micawber and Dr Johnson, with just a touch of Old Weller. In permitting him to give up the law for the Hackney, Providence was in her most economical mood, or she would have made Gemmell Lord Advocate of Scotland, and so wasted a Great Man.

What an artist in his profession ! Going up to Manchester to sell Wold’s Laertes, afterwards Haddon Marphil, to Philip Smith, the insurance magnate, he was kept waiting *in the kitchen*. Did Alec show annoyance ? Not a bit of it ! He beamed upon insolence, and clapped two hundred pounds on to the white-legged chestnut’s price. He will tell you with unction to this day that that wait in the kitchen was one of the most profitable two hours he ever spent.

In the year after the Great War Alec sold me a gelding, pointing out that it had a curb ! The way of the deal was this. I had gone down to the farm on a visit of inspection and seen all the stock out. Alec had nothing, it appeared, between twenty guineas and two thousand pounds, and I wanted a ‘gaffer’ for one-day country shows. And then I noticed that one box had been kept rigorously closed.

“ What’s in there ? ” I asked.

“ Ye canna buy that chap for all the money in your bank and mine ! ” was the answer.

Well, of course, I must have the horse out. He was a bay cob, harness all over, six years old, 14-3½, with great quality, a tremendous front, and the old Lord Derby look, being by Lord Hamlet out of a mare by Lord Derby II. We put the cob in the wagon, Alec drove, and Galanthus, as he was then called, put up a wonderful show. I made a flying bid of a hundred pounds, and have never seen a man so outraged.

“ If ye dinna want to buy the horse dinna insult him,”

Alec roared, in the voice Salvini was wont to use for " Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire ! " " Ye canna hae him for five hundred ! "

I went down to the farm again two days later, and the horse put up an even better show. The curb was not sensibly diminished, but neither was my eagerness to see *Galanthus* in my own stable. £400 was now touched upon by Alec as the kind of sum a man was lucky to pay for an animal of quality like unto that of this paragon. If I would offer that amount, then perhaps the difference could be split. Two days later, after lunch at the Piccadilly Hotel, we clinched the bargain at £350. " And mind ye," said Alec, as I was writing out the cheque, " *he's no sound !* " Look-at-Me, as I re-named him, won several first prizes, including the Novice 15-hand Class at the Royal Lancashire, and I sold him at the end of the following year, when prices had fallen 50 per cent., for £145. There was no bid for the horse at the sale, but I dropped him five minutes after he came out of the ring. The curb was there after two years of treatment; but I did not guarantee him sound, and he was the sort that a horse-lover will always buy. In the course of our negotiations Alec had, as usual, offered to give me a profit if ever I wanted to sell again—one walks into the trap knowing it to be there. Once only during our protracted deal did Gemmell give himself away. He had worked up his customary frenzy over the excellence of the animal: to hear him you would have thought this fifteen-hand cob was the last virtuosity of creation. Finally he wound up with the phrase: " And mind ye, he's a gr-r-and flat-catcher-r-r ! " Thus openly does this supreme fowler set his snare. I heard afterwards that the horse had originally cost him £90, curb included.

I remember Gemmell's frantic attempts to sell me a pony by Woodlands Eaglet, and my desperate endeavours to avoid a purchase. Two hundred pounds was the price asked. I was to see the gelding in the streets of Ayr at six in the morning before the traffic started, and I arrived at the stables at half-past five so as to be in at the harnessing. But you've got to get up early if you want to take in Gemmell. He was before me. I found the pony standing in the yard, a rug over his loins: he had been in the shafts since five ! Well, we had a show, and the pony was stone-cold, not only in the physical but also in the figurative sense.

He could hardly put one foot before the other, and when he did he put it wrong. I stood on the pavement of the main street in Ayr while Alec drove. Up and down, up and down, tirelessly.

“D’ye see that, mon ? ” he cried as he went past, waving his whip. And the less there was to see the more fervently he urged me to look, working himself up to a pitch of excitement so great that beads of sweat stood upon his brow. When the performance had lasted half an hour, and had begun to interfere with the trams, I said :

“I’m sorry, Alec, but the pony’s useless.”

He got down, and put off his fervour as Coquelin would put off a part.

“Ye’re recht, mon,” he said calmly ; “he’s no worth a damn ! ”

And over breakfast he asked me whether I thought the little b—— would fetch forty guineas at Crewe. I was at the sale, and it went for thirty-four.

One more picture, and I have done. It was at Richmond Show, and the open harness class under fifteen hands was being judged. It was a very hot day, and all the animals were a bit fidgety ; earlier on a clumsy brute had got loose, cleared the rails, and dashed among the crowd. Gemmell was driving a hot-tempered little mare, black in her heart as well as in her coat. Her crupper came off, and away she went. Gemmell stuck to her as bravely as man might, till at last she slewed round and upset the cart. For a moment the old boy lay still, and we thought he was killed. Slowly he raised his head but, perceiving a St John Ambulance man running up with a flask, immediately lowered it. Then, raising himself precariously to a sitting position, he drained the flask, groaned, lay down again, and sent the man back for more. He was perfectly unhurt ! May my old friend’s shadow be above ground for many years to come ! I am confident that it will never grow less.

But, alas, the shadow did grow less, dreadfully ! One day its owner disappeared from our midst and entered that nursing-home which he was never to leave. His mind clouded, his body went to nothing, and death did not come for ten years. He was seventy-nine.

Nov. 6 Recently in my neighbour's back garden, very Monday. beautiful in these mellow days, I saw a man and a boy digging a grave, or so it seemed, and both intensely Shakespearean. The man was in the grave, while the boy idled on the verge. I called Jock, who said, " Go, get thee to Yaughan : fetch me a stoup of liquor." I forgot all about this until last night, when, looking out of my bedroom window, I saw the moon shining on the tomb of the Capulets. It was my neighbour's Anderson shelter.

Nov. 7 The papers are making a fuss about night clubs Tuesday. and the soldiers on leave. What monstrous humbug ! What the boys are going to demand is lights, fun, drink, and a girl to cuddle—all at reasonable prices. This is entirely proper. " Single men in barracks don't grow into plaster saints," wrote Kipling. Neither do single men on active service !

Nov. 11 Although there was no ceremony in Whitehall Saturday. to-day all the buses stopped at eleven o'clock, and people stood still in the streets.

Nov. 13 Perhaps, after all, there is something in the theory Monday. that only the ultra-busy can find time for everything. Jock being laid up with what he calls an Anthological Carbuncle, I have to-day written 1000 words for *Shopping News*, corrected the first batch of proofs of the anthology, lunched in town *taking the bus both ways*, and dealt with an unusually large *Express* mail. To recognise junk is a matter of a quarter of a second ; to write a note of thanks and bung the stuff back takes minutes. In the middle of all this I found time to amuse myself with a parody of Meredith :

#### LOVE IN THE VALLEY

When from bed she rises clothed from neck to ankle  
In her long nightgown sweet as boughs of May,  
Beautiful she looks, like a tall garden-lily  
Pure from the night, and splendid for the day.

## LOVE IN THAMES VALLEY

When to bed she hastens tasselled round the middle,  
 In her neat pyjama striped and tiger-bright,  
 Beautiful she looks, more fit than any fiddle,  
 Pure from the day, and splendid for the night.

Nov. 14 There is a type of young man which is to be seen *Tuesday*. at the Café Royal and nowhere else, and never before 11 p.m. It is long-haired and unkempt, and vaguely related to the Arts. It wears no braces. Its trousers are always on the point of parting company with its pull-over, and its efforts to keep them up are impeded by a long and much-soiled Burberry. It wears a sports jacket. Its manners are casual. It is well-spoken and a gentleman. I meet one of this kind to-night, enthusiastically introduced to me by a poet whose acquaintance I made when I talked to a literary society at Cambridge a year or two ago. In well-modulated accents the young man tells me at length about a novel he has half written. The theme is transfusion of ideologies through sex permeation. I say I prefer the kind of story in which a short fat man is set upon by a cab-driver and rescued by a tall thin man. My novelist not knowing his *Pickwick*, we fall to discussion of the influence of Homer on Damon Runyon, as evinced by the recurrent adjective—his *ever-loving* wife, etc. When they turn us out of the Café the young man suggests beer at his place, and presently I find myself in a luxurious flat in Bloomsbury, and a front room principally taken up with a cocktail cabinet and a divan in cream leather which goes round two walls and a bit. *Objets d'art* everywhere, some books, and a good picture or two. The beer turns out to be his father's vintage claret and the dregs of his own liqueur bottles. Am I fond of chess? I say yes, whereupon Tinko, for that is what the poet calls the young man, produces some very fine chessmen and beats me. About four o'clock I begin to think I ought to know more about surname and so forth, and it appears that the boy's parents are close friends of my old friend Monty Shearman. I sum him up as a combination of brains, charm, and youth. The last is what matters. The young man will

tidy up by and by. And this old man will go to bed now. It is five o'clock.

Nov. 15 I continue to be snowed under by poems sent in *Wednesday*. by *D.E.* readers. The test for publication is not technical, but whether there is feeling, and if so, new feeling. Here is an example which arrived this morning with the covering letter, "An old woman sends you this."

#### MISSING

Don't say dead, say missing, she's so old—  
He was young and jolly, tall and bold.  
I saw them at the station, kissing,  
As she used to kiss the child at bye-bye.  
Leave her enough light to see to die by.

Don't say missing—tisn't kindness—to his wife.  
Let the blow be sudden, use the knife  
Like a skilful surgeon, she's so young.  
Black does go so well with golden hair.  
If she uses lipstick does that mean she didn't care?

Nov. 16 *Saloon Bar* at Wyndham's. A poorish comedy-  
*Thursday*. thriller with a remarkable portrait by Mervyn  
Johns of a regular customer. To me Mr Wickers  
is, as Damon Runyon would put it, nobody but my old friend  
John Scholes, the landlord of the Hanging Gate, half-way  
between Chapel-en-le-Frith and Whaley Bridge. This little  
pub is less than fifty yards from my old stables, and it is here,  
thirty years ago, that I drink and gossip every evening as  
soon as the horses are bedded down. Photos of Talke Princess,  
my first pony, and First Edition, my best pony—Ego is a  
little *horse*—still hang in the bar-parlour, or do when I am  
here a year ago. By the way, reading yesterday in Seymour  
Hicks's new book of chat about murder trials, I come across  
this story illustrating modern ignorance about the horse. In  
a horse-dealing case before Darling the dealer keeps alluding  
to "this little 'orse." "You see, my lord," he says, "this  
'ere little 'orse is a good little 'orse, a little 'orse which if I  
may say so is the best little 'orse I ever drove." Darling,  
interrupting him, says, "Wouldn't it save time if you called  
your animal a pony?" The ignorance of judges is proverbial,

though I am surprised Seymour should not know that a "little 'orse" is no more a pony than a little Queen Anne house is a cottage. Both animals have four legs and a tail; both buildings have four walls and a roof. And there the resemblance ends. But to get back to Mr Wickers. Like John Scholes, Wickers is all jowl. Equally with him as with J.S., thinking is an act of volition. His mind cannot achieve two things at once; when he drinks he drinks, and when he reflects he reflects. And he thinks concretely, in the sense that a thought is something with a beginning, a climax, and an end. His mind is like a clock which, wound up to strike, strikes and has no other business but to run down. "'Orses and dorgs,'" said the breeder of Suffolk Punches who sat behind David Copperfield on the London coach, "'orses and dorgs is wittles and drink to me—lodging, wife and children—reading, writing and 'rithmetic—snuff, tobacker and sleep.'" Mervyn Johns's performance made Wyndham's Theatre to-night very nearly as good a place to be in as my stables before the last war.

Nov. 18 Two coincidences at the Savage Club dinner.  
*Saturday.* (1) I was reading from Kenneth Edwards's account of Holbrook's raid on the Dardanelles in 1915, and had just got to where the Turkish batteries opened fire on the B.11 when three I.R.A. bombs fell in Regent Street with the precision of 'noises off.' (2) Later I asked George Mathew what the time was. He said 9.14. I pulled my watch out of my pocket, where it had lain unwound for a week. The hands showed 9.14 exactly.

Sat next to Eddie Marsh, who told me the story of how Charles Morgan, now working at the Admiralty, ran into an old sea-dog. "What are you doing here?" barked the S.D. "In the Intelligence, sir," said Charles. "Get your hair cut!" snapped the S.D. Eddie liked my tale of how, during an air-warning at night, he had been seen scampering across the lawn at the back of Raymond Buildings in a flannel night-gown, with no *sang-froid*, no monocle, and only one eyebrow. James Bone is the wicked inventor of this.

Nov. 19 Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* was well played Sunday. by the London Philharmonic under Sidney Beer this afternoon. If the symphony were a modern work it would be remarkable; considering that it is pre-Liszt and pre-leitmotif and pre the symphonic poem, it is stupendous. The audience was small and wildly enthusiastic, as usual with this unluckiest of composers, probably the most original genius of the lot, since he invented modern orchestration and so showed the way to Liszt, Wagner, Tschaikowsky, and Strauss.

In the S.T. to-day Ernest Newman wants to know why fourth-rate works like Saint-Saëns's *Le Rouet d'Omphale* continue to be played, while nobody will ever want to hear again works like Pick-Mangiagalli's *Sortilegi* or Hamerick's *Symphonie Spirituelle*. "Yet probably the invention, and certainly the craftsmanship, of either of these works is superior to that of the Saint-Saëns." I can tell Ernest. Fourth-rate composers who endure do so because they have hit upon a tune or a rhythm or a trick of atmosphere which the public wants to hear and go on hearing. If the public doesn't find something ear-haunting in a composer all the invention and craftsmanship in the world won't save him. With the possible exception of the *Carnaval Romain* there is hardly a whistleable original tune in the whole of Berlioz. The fact that *that* invention and *that* craftsmanship and *that* glorious hash of sound have not popularised this all but colossal genius proves my point.

Amusing dinner last night at the Berkeley Grill. Host, Herbert Morgan. Guests, clockwise, Mrs A. P. Herbert, Humbert Wolfe, Lady Annaly, A. P. Herbert, Pamela Frankau, J.A., Princess Bibesco. From the latter's intarissable flow I disengaged this: "Men can no more conceive a revolution without atrocities than women can conceive a hat without a feather." Also this story of the late Lord Curzon, who had a mania for re-arranging the caskets in the family vault. The second footman, whose Sunday morning job it was to do this, when asked whether he didn't find it a gruesome business, replied, "No. I used to like hearing his lord-

ship say, ' Jenkins, put the tenth Baron on the third shelf.' " This becomes, automatically, No. 6 in Brother Edward's *L'Ecole des Morts* series.

Nov. 23 "Get me a lass that can plain-boil a potato, if she *Thursday*. was a whüre off the streets," said Weir of Hermiston. I understand this. Give me a messenger who can tell a passenger-train from a goods, and I care nothing if he plain-boils his infants and decapitates them with an egg-spoon. All this because, by being put on the wrong train, my page-proofs of the anthology did not turn up. A wasted day.

Nov. 24 In the new edition of *Who's Who in the Theatre Friday*. Jock gives his recreations as "Serendipity and cribbage." My definition of the first of these is "fooling around in a leisurely and cultured manner." Sometimes I wish Jock wouldn't serendipitate quite so much. Anyhow, it's a lie; his real recreations are booze and Bach. If I had given mine I should have said "Work." I am so tired that yesterday afternoon I slept through half of Mozart's "Linz" Symphony. I made a point, however, of keeping awake for Delius's *Eventyr*, and Sibelius No. 6, and I now realise that, with the exception of Cornelius, a delightful little master, I shall never be an ' elius ' fan.

Nov. 25 Letter from a soldier at the front to his wife: *Saturday*. "No, dear Mabel, I am not spending any money on mademoiselles or beer. I am sending it all to you. So let me fight this bloody war in peace."

Nov. 28 Listened in last night to Chopin's deservedly little-known Sonata for Piano and 'Cello, Op. 65. While this wilderness was being explored Jock wrote down the list of Chopin's works *in their order of composition*. I checked this to-day and found the list complete except for four blanks, and the opus numbers correct in all but six cases.

Nov. 29 From a Harley Street lecture on the subject of *Wednesday*. How to Sleep Well: "Be careful how you spend the evening. It's what you do out of bed that affects you when you turn in." One of those cases, surely, in which the converse is equally true!

Dec. 1 To the Embassy last night to see a modern-dress *Friday*. version of *Julius Cæsar*. I hate this preciousity, the argument for which presumably runs something like this. The Elizabethans saw these plays acted in the costume of *their* day. Why shouldn't we, the audiences of 1939, see them acted in the costume of *our* day, the idea being that the modern audience is a feeble-witted thing which will be put off if the clothes are other than those which it is accustomed to see in the street? All right, let's agree! But since what is sauce for the eye is sauce for the ear also, then this poor, feeble-witted, modern audience must be equally put off when the language used in a play is not that which it is accustomed to hear in the street. This being so, why not re-write the plays to suit the modern ear? Why all this old-fashioned stuff about the "Bay'd, brave hart," hunters "signed in thy spoil and crimson'd in thy lethe," dishes carved for gods, lumb mouths opening ruby lips, and so on? To-day a dictator is bumped off or not, as the case may be. Reading Damon Runyon's story *The Brain Goes Home* in bed last night, I came across a passage which only wants some alteration in the names to be a perfect transcription of Shakespeare's Act III, Sc. 1. Reading Daffy Jack as Brutus, the Brain Cæsar, Homer swing Metellus Cimber, Big Nig Mark Antony, and the teller of the story as Lepidus, here is the passage:

Now what happens early one morning but a guy by the name of Brutus hauls off and sticks a shiv in Cæsar's left side. It seems that this is done at the request of a certain party by the name of Metellus Cimber, who owes Cæsar plenty of dough in a gambling transaction, and who becomes very indignant when Cæsar presses him somewhat for payment. It seems that Brutus, who is considered a very good shiv artist, aims at Cæsar's heart, but misses it

by a couple of inches, leaving Cæsar with a very bad cut in his side which calls for some stitching.

Mark Antony, the crap-shooter, and I are standing at the corner of Fifty-second Street and Seventh Avenue along about 2 A.M., speaking of not much, when Cæsar comes stumbling out of Fifty-second Street, and falls in Mark Antony's arms, practically ruining a brand-new topcoat, which Mark Antony pays sixty bucks for a few days back, with the blood that is coming out of the cut. Naturally, Mark Antony is indignant about this, but we can see that it is no time to be speaking to Cæsar about such matters. We can see that Cæsar is carved up quite some, and is in a bad way.

Of course we are not greatly surprised at seeing Cæsar in this condition, because for years he is practically no price around this town, what with this guy and that being anxious to do something or other to him, but we are never expecting to see him carved up like a turkey....

Shall work this into something for the *S.T.*, ending with a reference to those "ever-loving" wives Portia and Calpurnia.

*Dec. 4 Nouveaux Contes Scabreux*, No. 9. A hideous Monday. old buck is possessed of a fascination so compelling that he cannot get any of his mistresses, from washerwoman to duchess, to love him for his money alone. Pure Maupassant. Title: *Beauté plus qu'Inutile*.

*Dec. 5* No kind of modesty is going to prevent me from *Tuesday*. reproducing this charming letter from Dorset :

DEAR FRIEND,

When War and Wet Weather combined give me a mental Hump I turn to you, and Strube ; then I can smile again !

I am ninety-one, have memories of the Crimea ! Read (and digested) Douglas and Blanchard Jerrold in *Lloyd's*, loved Reading : and all the writers from Bulwer to Beaverbrook ! And the two who shine out in my mind with a permanent sparkle are George Augustus Sala and *yourself* !

Humbly yours . . .

Dec. 7 Came across this Message for To-day. Bacon, of Thursday. course:

Walled Townes, Stored Arcenalls and Armouries, Goodly Races of Horse, Chariots of Warre, Elephants, Ordnance, Artillery, and the like: All this is but a Sheep in a Lions Skin, except the Breed and disposition of the People be stout and warlike. Nay Number (it selfe) in Armies importeth not much, where the People is of weake Courage: For (as *Virgil* saith) *It never troubles a Wolfe, how many the sheepe be.*

Dec. 8 Quite by accident have hit on a wonderful Quiz: Friday. How long was Robinson Crusoe on his island before he saw Man Friday's footstep? Answer: Ten years.

Dec. 9 Some unknown benefactress—I feel I am right Saturday. about the sex—has made me a gift of her collection of theatrical photographs, some of which are rare. W. H. Kendal in a full beard and dandling a parrot (*The Falcon*, 1880), and John Hare as a then Colonel Blimp (*The Queen's Shilling*, same date). Geneviève Ward in *Forget-me-Not*, looking “werry fierce,” Minnie Palmer in 1881, looking forty, though she was actually only twenty-four, Lily Langtry looking majestic but plain, and Charles Wyndham looking helplessly on while Mary Rorke smokes a cigarette. A sonsy portrait of Mrs Stirling. Lovely pictures of Mary Anderson, Alma Murray, Marion Terry, Kate Rorke, and a superb one of Mrs Kendal in her middle thirties, perfectly sure of herself and, what is more, perfectly sure of Mr Kendal. Forbes-Robertson in that profile which rebuked John Barrymore's, and a seasick, duck-in-a-thunderstorm Wilson Barrett.

Dec. 10 The anthology is getting first-rate notices. Both Sunday. Dick Shanks (*Sunday Times*) and Basil de Selincourt (*Observer*) have grasped that it is intended for the unlettered. Judging from the amount of work I have put in during these last few days, the hardest part of a book comes after it is written. Either that, or a week of warding

off bronchitis, or Monty's excellent lunch with a pint of unaccustomed fizz sent me to sleep all through the Queen's Hall concert.

Afterwards called on John Rayner, still in bed after three months with a disease successively diagnosed by all the best specialists as influenza, dog-bite, malaria, and typhoid. Found him looking like Alfred Lunt in *Amphitryon* 38, with a red beard and enthusing to a bevy of she-intellectuals over the first number of Cyril Connolly's monthly, *Horizon*.

*Dec. 11 A. W. Baskcomb*, the original Slightly in *Peter Pan*, *Monday*. died after six years of suffering; he had a seizure in

1933 which left him unable to speak. I have the best recollection of how he and Ronald Squire accepted a challenge thrown out by Darlington and me to play any two actors at golf for the best supper in London. Bill and I paid, and from the start it was obvious we were going to. The match took place at Moor Park. Ronnie had a small-headed, vicious-looking brassie with which he kept putting second shots dead. And I have never forgotten Archie's putting. He trembled all over, and his putter shook worse than a drunkard's morning glass. But the putts went down, and with each of them Archie grew gloomier and gloomier. The last time I saw him was on a Sunday in 1934, when they brought him to lunch at Harry Preston's place at Brighton. He tried hard to say something, but couldn't. A gentle, shy creature, and a great favourite on both sides of the curtain.

*Dec. 18 I spent last night, as I suspect millions did, lending Monday. a cat-and-mouse ear to the radio and waiting for*

11.30, the hour at which the *Admiral Graf Spee* must leave Montevideo. But probably few other people were simultaneously steaming their heads over a jug of Friar's Balsam (laryngitis) while keeping one eye on Stevenson's *The English Admirals*. The *Graf Spee*'s commander, Captain Langsdorff, has been blamed, I think wrongly, for not being another Sir Richard Grenville. (R.L.S. had a fine answer to the man who complained that the story of the *Revenge* set a

pestilent example—"I am not inclined to imagine we shall ever be put into any practical difficulty from a superfluity of Grenvilles." But the whole essay is well worth re-reading.) There is no doubt, to my mind, that Captain Langsdorff, in scuttling his ship, did what suited us least. In addition he saved a thousand lives, and I am not moved by the argument that in a war of this size a thousand lives are nothing. At the same time, like everybody else, I was a little disappointed, as when one's adversary at chess resigns to avoid being mated. But the really monstrous part of the business was that I found myself regarding the whole thing as entertainment. The wireless, of course, was responsible. At half-past ten a voice announced that the *Graf Spee* had exactly one hour before she must leave the harbour; she was getting steam up, and smoke was coming from her funnels. Then some Debussy. Next, at a quarter past eleven, came the news that the pocket battleship was getting under way. And now some light music, like the overture to a drama. Would the curtain ring up on time? If not, one more black mark for the B.B.C.! Yet another example of the maddest phenomenon in this wholly mad world—that the filming or wirelessing of an event, whether it is the Grand National or an attack in force on the Maginot Line, is held to be of more importance than the event itself.

*Dec. 21* Captain Langsdorff's suicide shows the *Graf Thursday. Spee*'s commander at his full height. Since he was resolved to die in any event, there was nothing to prevent him making a bid for personal glory except consideration for the lives of his sailors.

*Dec. 22* Letter from a friend in the country: "There are *Friday.* six evacuated children in our house. My wife and I hate them so much that we have decided to *take away* something from them for Christmas!"

*Dec. 23* B. Lillie is another who won't be gammoned by *Saturday.* Priestley. *Vide* her cabaret-star in *All Clear.* Offered sables, she pleads for a sunbonnet. A

week-end palace at Rickmansworth would be very nice, but is there a shed at the bottom of the garden in which she can play? For it seems that she would recapture the joys of innocence. All of which is pure Sybil Linchester in Jack's play. The Lillie's view of the matter begins at the top right-hand corner of her forehead and with an eyebrowish pucker which, gathering momentum, sweeps across the whole countenance and disappears at the left-hand corner of the chin. The avalanche has lasted a second. But a second is enough to show up Jack's naïve, provincial nonsense. Yet how good he is when he lets *allegory* alone and sticks to (a) three dimensions or (b) four. Pity he can't see that the Banks of the Nile are beyond him!

*Christmas Eve.* Dense fog. Looking through the week's papers, come across a letter to the *Times* in which A. J. Munnings complains that Braque sees oranges square. Why not? I am not worried when Modigliani paints a woman sitting on a high chair with her chin in her hand and her elbow resting on the floor. The reason I'm not worried is that Eric Newton has taught me not to look for sense in pictures, but to listen to them as though they were music. In painting I can just about manage this; indeed, the picture I like best in my little collection is a de Pisis in which a man looking like Edwin Evans is walking into a free library with a tree growing out of his hat. I don't even pretend that this is the Tree of Knowledge!

Where I begin to jib is in music. *Pace* Ernest Newman, I fear I shall never be able to stop listening—I listen with pleasure to Scriabin and Poulenc and Milhaud—and substitute reading, the matter to be read being the composer's musical thought. I jib still more when I am told that a poem can dispense with rhyme, metre, and even meaning so long as it discovers "evocative rhythms" and "image sequences." It isn't that I don't like some modern poetry. I like a little of it enormously. Straight, I do! I find much of Edith Sitwell imaginative and stimulating—in short, fun. But when in music I hear the atonal stuff I say like Antony to the Roman

messenger, "Grates me: the sum." When I read Dylan Thomas's *January 1939*, beginning,

Because the pleasure-bird whistles  
after the hot wires,  
Shall the blind horse sing sweeter?  
Convenient bird and beast are  
lodged to suffer  
The supper and knives of a mood,

I think of Coleridge's "To please me, a poem must be either music or sense; if it is neither, I confess I cannot interest myself in it." Compare John Betjeman's *Upper Lamourne*, which sings like Tennyson :

Feathery ash in leathery Lamourne  
Waves above the sarsen stone,  
And Edwardian plantations  
So coniferously moan  
As to make the swelling downland,  
Far surrounding, seem their own.

That I should like some modern stuff in all the arts—to me Epstein's moderns are as sympathetic as Eric Gill's ancients are revolting—is of extreme importance. If I did not I should have to consider giving up my job on the *S.T.* The position of the dramatic critic who takes himself seriously is extremely delicate. His job is to encourage to the best of his ability whatever is new and genuine, and to refuse to be hoodwinked by the new and bogus. He must hold the door wide open, and shut it tight. He is at once explorer and watch-dog. About one thing I am absolutely determined. This is not to be afraid of saying No to pretentious rubbish because fifty years ago Clement Scott made a fool of himself over Ibsen.

*Christmas Day.* Fog-bound and unable to get to Monty's party, the second time I have defaulted in ten years. Fortunately Leo Pavia is marooned here with me, and has been for two days. Have never known anybody with more catarrh or wit, and I spend the day listening to his snuffles, gurgles, and *bons mots*. It is incredible that so much malice should have a background of so much childishness. He comes into the room saying, "There's a young woman at

the Telephone Exchange who insists that it's six-fifty-nine exactly. I tried to argue with her, but she wouldn't listen." I then found out that he had rung TIM for the first time in his life and didn't know she was mechanical.

*Boxing Day.* Leo departs. Cut 25,000 words out of the diary. Fog still bad in places, but manage to crawl to Café Royal for dinner.

*Dec. 28* The sales of *Speak for England* amount to 2883 *Thursday*. copies. This figure, which excites Hutchinson's, leaves me unmoved. All my books go off with a bang, and then misfire.

*Dec. 29* I glean from the lunchers at the Savage Club to-day: *Friday*.

- (1) That the war will last four years.
- (2) That a prominent Cabinet Minister has said that the war will end in the coming spring. "With the huntin'" is alleged to have been the exact phrase.

*Dec. 30* Have spent to-day playing about with figures. *Saturday.* My year's work :

|                      |         |       |
|----------------------|---------|-------|
| <i>Sunday Times</i>  | 84,000  | words |
| <i>Daily Express</i> | 110,000 | „     |
| <i>Tatler</i>        | 60,000  | „     |
| <i>Pseudonym</i>     | 88,000  | „     |
| <i>Shopping News</i> | 12,000  | „     |
| <i>Ego 4</i>         | 45,000  | „     |
| Odd articles         | 6,000   | „     |
| <hr/>                |         |       |
| 405,000 words        |         |       |

I also calculate that since September 1921, when I joined the *Saturday Review*, I have written 4,360,000 words of criticism and 1,260,000 words of original stuff—novels, essays, biography, and autobiography. Grand total, excluding anthologies and reprints, 5,620,000 words. Subtract 620,000

words for my quotations, and the total for eighteen years is a net 5,000,000 words. During exactly the same period Balzac wrote the 44 books, running to 50 volumes, of the *Comédie Humaine*. An average of 90,000 words brings B.'s total up to 4,500,000 words. Whence we get the pleasing thought that I have written nearly half a million words more than Balzac in the same period.

Now for finance. Since 1921 I have made £54,000, and as my adverse balance, according to Stanley Rubinstein, stands to-day at £1350—excluding income tax to be paid in the coming year—it follows that during the last eighteen years expenditure has exceeded income by Mr Micawber's sixpence in the pound, not a halfpenny more and not a farthing less. The income-tax people tell me that in the matter of the present year I have made £4870. During the first nine months I paid out to creditors £1800, which, with £866 paid by Stanley during the last three months, makes a total of £2666 knocked off my debts.



## 1940

Jan. 1 "He was not a great actor," bleats the *Times of Monday*. Benson, who died yesterday at the age of eighty-one. "He was not a great actor," brays the *Daily Telegraph*, and goes on to say, "Indeed, there will be few dispassionate judges to assert that he was even a very good one." What I should like to know is—how old are these obituarists, since Benson was not at his best after 1910? I took Jock to see him act at Hammersmith some eight years ago, and was sorry: there was no acting left. Ellen Terry says in her memoirs that as a young man Benson had not nearly so much of the actor's instinct as Terriss! But about him later on: "A good actor. Oddly enough, the more difficult the part, the better he is—I like his Lear!"

About Benson in his heyday I cannot, and will not, be dispassionate. He gave what, to a young playgoer, seemed tremendous things. The thwarted walk of Hamlet; the blood-encrusted, wholly barbaric Macbeth; the patrician in Coriolanus; the zoological, unsentimentalised Caliban; Richard Crookback delivering, "Come let us to our holy task again!" in a gallery, and at the departure of the lords tossing the prayer-book into the air and so that it fell into the room below as the act-drop descended. I can both see and hear Benson come clanking on to the bare stage as Henry V, carrying a mace with a spike-studded ball swinging from it, and saying, "What's he that wishes so?" as though the fierce young King was in a real paddy with Westmoreland. He had four things most modern actors lack—presence, a profile befitting a Roman coin, voice, and virility to make you believe that Orlando overthrew more than his enemies. His vocal effects were astonishing; Pistol's "There roared the sea, and trumpet-clangour sounds" would have understated some of them.

Benson always allowed Shakespeare to speak for himself *as far as was practicable* in the case of an overworked manager and producer who was also leading man ; when he forgot a line he would fill in either with something from another play or some Shakespeare-sounding matter of his own.

This brings me to the very odd business of *Richard II*. Of this astonishing performance—the finest piece of Shakespearean acting I have ever seen, whether the actor knew what he was up to or not—Montague wrote on December 4th, 1899 :

There was just one point—perhaps it was a mere slip—at which Mr Benson seemed to us to fail. In the beginning of the scene at Pomfret what one may call the artistic heroism of this man, so craven in everything but art, reaches its climax. Ruined, weary, with death awaiting in the next room, he is shown still toiling at the attainment of a perfect, because perfectly expressed, apprehension of such flat dregs as are left to him of life, still following passionately on the old quest of the ideal word, the unique image, the one perfect way of saying the one thing. “I cannot do it ; yet I’ll hammer it out.” Everybody knows that cry of the artist wrestling with the angel in the dark for the word it will not give, of Balzac “plying the pick for dear life, like an entombed miner,” of our own Stevenson, of Flaubert “sick, irritated, the prey a thousand times a day of cruel pain,” but “continuing my labour like a true working man, who, with sleeves turned up, in the sweat of his brow, beats away at his anvil, whether it rain or blow, hail or thunder.” That “yet I’ll hammer it out” is the gem of the whole passage, yet on Saturday Mr Benson, by some strange mischance, left the words clean out.

And now for the sequel. With this wonderful piece of criticism in my ears, and being twenty-two at the time, I went during the week to see *Richard II*. Trembling with excitement, I persisted with the stage-doorkeeper until, after the fourth act, they let me into the presence. Reeling off as much as I could remember of Montague’s criticism, I wound up by asking whether the omission of the significant line had been accidental. Benson heard me out with the greatest patience and politeness, and then proceeded to give me my first lesson



*Photo Keystone*

*Sir Frank Benson*

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in acting as an art which is instinctive rather than intellectual. He said that it had never occurred to him to think of Richard in the light in which my critical friend presented him. *He had never thought of the unhappy monarch in any æsthetic or self-conscious connection whatever.* He had never regarded him as a *poseur*. He had viewed him—I forget now in exactly what light Benson professed to view his own creation. Something about Gibbon and the Decline and Fall! Upon my insisting on an answer to my question, he smiled, and said he did not attach importance to these particular words, and had left them out intentionally!

I went back to my seat, and the words were again omitted. Then, either to make amends, or for sheer plaguing's sake, Benson recovered the missing line and gratuitously pitchforked it into the text at a place where the insertion did not make too great a hash of the sense.

I have been studying how I may compare  
This prison where I live unto the world :  
And for because the world is populous,  
And here is not a creature but myself,  
I cannot do it; yet *I'll hammer it out*,  
My brain I'll prove the female to my soul;  
My soul the father; etc., etc.

is the passage in which occurred Benson's sin of omission. He repaid it thus :

Music do I hear?  
Ha, ha! keep time. How sour sweet music is  
When time is broke and no proportion kept!  
*Yet I'll hammer it out.*  
So is it in the music of men's lives. . . .

Well, there it is! All I shall say further of this great actor and Englishman is that for forty years he brought Shakespeare's music into the lives of hundreds of thousands of young people. "The isle is full of noises." For forty years the English provinces rang with those "twangling instruments" which were the tones of Benson's voice. They gave us infinite pleasure, and hurt nobody except, possibly, their enunciator, late on Saturday night, after a hard week's work. If I had the choosing of Benson's epitaph it would be Othello's "I have done the state some service."

Jan. 2      Repercussions about Benson. From Jock, who will  
 Tuesday. spend the entire day with me and drop me a p.c.  
 on the way home :

DEAR JAMES,

You wrote something to-day which implied that when I went to Hammersmith with you some ten years ago I could see nothing in Benson. I saw something majestic, but in ruins. It needed no great amount of critical imagination to perceive that the castle had been a noble one. Only the bare walls stood, and the wind around them was bleak and loud. Forgive this post-office pen—it splutters like an Old Bensonian.

Yours aye,  
 Jock

And this letter :

*Grafton House*  
 3 *Golden Square, W.1*  
 Jan. 2, 1940

DEAR AGATE,

I hope you will write about dear F. R. Benson next Sunday—he was my first manager in 1896, and I was his for a short period in 1902. The critics, I feel, have not quite done justice to him as an actor—he had every qualification of a first-rate actor except discipline ; appearance, physique, charm, intellect, and flaming enthusiasm, and if he had only served a longer apprenticeship with Irving he might well have been regarded as his legitimate successor : as it was, some of his interpretations were magnificent—notably Hamlet and Richard II.

The best performance I ever saw him give of Hamlet was one Saturday night at Manchester when he was perhaps a little tired (which he would not have admitted) after a matinée of *The Merchant of Venice* and a hockey match in the morning followed by a game of water-polo and no time for lunch or dinner, as there was business to be attended elsewhere.

Yours sincerely,  
 W. ANGUS MACLEOD

Jan. 8 More repercussions :  
Monday.

Hill Cottage  
Great Easton  
Dunmow, Essex  
8—1—40

JAMES AGATE, Esq.

DEAR SIR,

As one of the once young who saw him in his best days and owes him so much for fine and sincere interpretations over a number of years it was good to read your *Sunday Times* note on Benson. Strangely enough, though I saw him in many parts, I cannot recall him as outstanding to a special degree in any one save as Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*. I could not tell you now a thing about any of his interpretations; I only know that the visits of his company to our town had great significance for me and spread the golden light of Arden about our mean streets. There was always such fine teamwork in his company, and amongst his faithful stalwarts one actor in particular, Geo. R. Weir, had my entire devotion. Also, though it heap laughter upon me, I will say that in the rosy recollections of my youth Mrs Benson (at the age of forty at least!) was a perfect Juliet.

Yours sincerely,  
A. E. COPPARD

P.S. I last saw him about 1913, when he had indeed begun to rant.

Belle Vue House,  
Ilkley, Yorkshire  
7th January, 1940

MY DEAR AGATE,

All Old Bensonians owe you a debt of gratitude for your splendid article upon our old Master, in to-day's *Sunday Times*. To all those who loved him, feared and admired him, your happy and inspired Memoriam will act as healing balm. Your Epitaph is perfect. I was with him a few hours before the end. Fearless and undaunted, with the spirit of adventure in his eyes, smiling, a fine picture of a fine man. Thank you from the few of us left who worked with him.

Yours ever,  
HENRY AINLEY

*Abbey Green  
Sea View Avenue  
Angmering-on-Sea*

DEAR MR JAMES AGATE,

That is a damned fine article on Frank Benson. I disagree with (nearly) every word of it.

That desire expressed on, I think, page 320 of *Ego 3* is now gratified—and honestly—even though the words are written by a man of no importance. How can you, who insist on Irving's greatness, apply 'great' to Benson, with whom I acted in the days of my youth in the theatre, I hardly understand.

Perhaps it is in the same kind of way as that in which Horace referred to Minerva as second to Jupiter—but a long way down, if my memory of the Ode is correct.

The omission of that line in *Richard II*, to which you added an interesting anecdote, was nothing unusual with him. I should doubt if any leading actor ever studied his words less carefully.

Hermann Vezin, whom I always called my dramatic god-father, for he often helped me to parts when I began, and did introduce me to Benson, with whom he was on friendly terms—Vezin told me that one evening he went to see Benson play *Macbeth* in a suburban theatre, and, noticing how imperfect he was in the text, determined to count the mistakes in the rest of the play. There were 104!

The first time I played Beauséant in *The Lady of Lyons* with him he said to me at the last rehearsal, "You won't get any cues from me to-night."

I didn't.

In *Ego 3* you add Caliban to the list of his great performances. I remember saying, as I came out of the Lyceum after seeing his production of *The Tempest*, "The most jejune production ever put on that glorified stage. Benson conceived an orang-outang, and brought forth a marmozet."

I don't quarrel with your epitaph—should you be asked to write it—for Benson did take Shakespeare up and down the land.

That same epitaph might be selected for my old friend Philip Ben Greet, for he likewise introduced Shakespeare to hundreds of thousands of youngsters throughout Great Britain and the United States.

But no one could ever call Philip a great actor by any stretch of the imagination.

Faithfully,

RUDOLPH DE CORDOVA

Jan. 9 The death of Humbert Wolfe, who passed away *Tuesday* in his sleep on Friday night, has provoked some astonishing appreciations in the Press. Astonishing, because Humbert was generally disliked. People funked that air of disdain or, at best, patronage, and resented the way he looked over their shoulder. "V.G.G." seizes on this in a moving poem in the *Observer* which begins :

I think I shall always remember you, Humbert,  
With your head turned sideways a little and your eyes  
Amazed and dazzled by some vision of unguessed beauty,  
Like a boy looking out of a window at astonishing skies.

For Humbert's aloofness had its roots in shyness ; he found the world vulgar, and could not help looking his thought even if he could help putting it into words. With the shyness went astonishing spirits—Beverley Baxter in the *S.T.* alludes to his "exuberant melancholy"—and the result was a brilliant quality of wit, half Jewish and half Italian. With his sallow complexion and fine profile he had the Renaissance air, knew that he had it, dressed to it, and sometimes behaved to it. I have it in my mind that the Eliot-Auden-Isherwood gang look down their noses at Humbert's poetry. At least, there is no example of it in *The Faber Book of Modern Verse*. On Friday morning I had a note from him asking for a copy of *Speak for England*, for which he had given me his poem 9.50 from King's Cross.<sup>1</sup> About this I have a story. In my *L. of C.* there is this passage :

Imagine that the train has dropped you at five o'clock in the morning at a little station in the dales. Before you, ensconced in the greenest of hollows, lies the camp—row after row of trim tents, so many pagodas in some storyteller's dawn. From the slopes of the hills and the tops of the dark fir-trees unseen fingers are plucking away the shrouds of wreathing mist, which cling a little yet, reluctant

<sup>1</sup> See *Ego*, p. 167.

to leave this tiny Paradise. You catch your breath as you think of these quiet dales and the garish city only seven hours away. There is no one on the station, and the gates are locked. You throw your kit over the palings, and climb a fence a few yards away by the signal-box. Not a soul stirs as you creep through the ghostly lines, brush the dew from the streets of this grassy village, and unlac the door of your house, striking damp after the close, hot joys of London.

I quote this because I was the soldier on leave, the camp was in Yorkshire, and "the garish city only seven hours away" was evoked by Humbert's poem, which I was reading in the train as it passed under the lee of York Minster. When I asked Humbert if I might have the poem for the anthology he said, "Dear James, it's yours already. You've printed it so often that you've made it yours, and in any case I give it you now, freely and for ever." The anthology was on the way to him when he died.

Trains played a considerable part in my relationship with Humbert. It was in the ten o'clock from St Pancras to Manchester that on a Saturday morning in December 1929 I opened the *Saturday Review* and found two columns headed "A New Star" and all about my novel *Responsibility*. I remember one sentence of it. "A star of the first magnitude, Aldebaran among pasty twinklers." The reason this did not turn my head was that I knew then that I had shot my bolt as a novelist, even though I was to make one and a half attempts later on.

And it was in a train that, having possessed myself of *The Bermondsey Poetry Book*, I read the exquisite *Valentino Goes to Heaven*. I used to tell Humbert that this was his best poem, and he would smile and shake his head. He never reprinted it, and when I asked him for a copy of it a few months ago he went to immense trouble to dig out an early transcript. Here are a few stanzas :

He was so slight a thing,  
he was so white a thing,  
with his beautiful body, and the sinuous grace  
of his tenuous face.

He was so unbroken a thing,  
so half-woken a thing,  
with his ignorant beauty, and air of a stupid  
theatrical cupid.

He was so unintentional a thing,  
he was so unproved a thing,  
that he smiled at the gate as though Peter were  
his own photographer.

He was so trifling a thing,  
he was so heart-rifling a thing,  
that an angel was caught by the nebulous grace  
of his fabulous face

and seeing him so mean a thing,  
so in-between a thing,  
cried to St Peter, " O Peter be merciful  
to this mock-Parsifal.

" Silver in mail and helm,  
in an eternal film,  
let him go flashing as if he played  
in a crusade.

" Make a new thing of him,  
an untrue Spring of him,  
and a shadow shall be heaven by shadows enticed for him,  
and a shadow be God and a shadow be Christ for him."

*Jan. 12* The music at the Benson memorial service was *Friday*. from Bach, Purcell, Beethoven, and Elgar. All very noble until a well-meaning actor weighed in with some unwanted Frances Allitsen.

I suppose one must say of these unpaid tributes what Balzac's Madame Colleville said when her daughter Céleste refused to sing after the elegant and almost professional Comtesse Torna de Godollo : " On chante comme on chante ! " My copy of *Les Petits Bourgeois* is still the one Brother Edward passed on to me as part of a pact made forty years ago, whereby I have the present onus and custody of the fifty volumes of the *Comédie Humaine*, ultimately the property of the survivor. Edward was always a great underliner, and it is always the same note that he underlines :

Ce jeune homme avait ce qu'on nomme en province de la dignité, c'est-à-dire qu'il se tenait raide et qu'il était ennuyeux.

Affreuse condition de l'homme ! il n'y a pas un de ses bonheurs qui ne vienne d'une ignorance quelconque !

M. de Châtelet avait commencé sa carrière par la place de secrétaire des commandements d'une princesse impériale. Il possédait toutes les incapacités exigées par sa place.

Toucher aux choses de théâtre est une des ambitions éternellement vivantes de la petite bourgeoisie.

Jan. 16 A letter from Rangoon :

Tuesday.

*University College  
Rangoon, Burma*  
December 21st, 1939

JAMES AGATE, Esq.,  
c/o *Sunday Times*,  
London, W.C.1

DEAR SIR,

In these gloomy days perhaps the following 'howler' may afford a chuckle to the biographer of Rachel. Recently I had occasion to consult Mrs Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*. In the index to my edition is the following: "Rachel, Mdlle., French actress, 208, 336, 337, 348." Turning to the first reference, I found: ". . . the same tender and faithful spirit as that in which Jacob served for Rachel."

I hope you have not come across this gem before.

Yours truly,

J. SELWYN TURNER

Jan. 18 At one time I contemplated a series of Flaubertian "Gigantesques." If the project had materialised I should certainly have included this from an advertisement column which I saw to-day :

Coty Talc makes ordinary undies feel like finest silk, and silk undies feel like the passionless caress of an angel.

Jan. 19 Neville Cardus is going to Australia to write about Friday. their music and cricket. Will be away a year. He told me to-night that at the age of eleven he sold newspapers barefoot in the streets of Manchester, and at thir-

teen delivered the washing taken in by his mother. Becoming a professional cricketer, at nineteen he had saved enough money to pay for a holiday abroad.

*Jan. 20* My proposal in the *Daily Express* to evacuate all *Saturday* pet dogs to Rutland and so reduce accidents in the black-out has roused the usual storm of protests. But one man writes, "Why evacuate? Why not turn them into dinners for *bona-fide* house-dogs, sheep-dogs, blind men's dogs, police dogs, and any other kind of dog that can prove its utility? In the matter of poms, pekes, pugs, and poodledom generally I will stand shoulder to shoulder with you in any *dogrom* you may be contemplating."

*Jan. 23* Re-reading Archer's Introduction to *The Master Tuesday. Builder*, come upon this Frightful Warning to Critics to Stick to their Last :

Substantially, the play is one long dialogue between Solness and Hilda; and it would be quite possible to analyse this dialogue in terms of music, noting (for example) the announcement first of this theme and then of that, the resumption and reinforcement of a theme which seemed to have been dropped, the contrapuntal interweaving of two or more motives, a *scherzo here*, a *fugal passage there*.

Italics mine.

*Jan. 31* Bitter cold. Even with fires burning in four *Wednesday*. rooms I have had to put on my hat before venturing into other parts of the house.

*Feb. 1* Willie Richardson is dead, at the age of seventy-seven, and the Savage Club is much upset about it. He was the general butt; not to tease him would have been thought odd, and we are wondering if we were not sometimes a little unkind. But I think Willie enjoyed being plied with drink and persuaded to recite *Lochinvar*, which he did with enormous energy and gusto. Indeed, his intensity could be quite frightening. But then, in his

nsignificant way, Willie had very great dignity. He was tiny, *hétif*, poorly clad, and when he sat in the library writing, it vas, a wag said, like mice frisking in the wastepaper-basket. Noboby knew for what publications he wrote, though obscure ncyclopædias and the unreadable compilations that lie about hotel smoking-rooms were suspected. Nor did anybody know where he lived, or on what. We guessed that his private ife had been tragic. I saw him two nights before he died, sitting in the hall waiting for a taxi to take him to hospital. With his feet tucked under him and his chin sunk in his thin claret-coloured muffler he looked like a schoolboy awaiting reprimand. I talked to him for a minute or two, trying to cheer him up, and thinking of Lamb's " You are just boat-weight. Bless me, how little you look ! "

Feb. 2 Two letters :

Friday.

15 *Hay Hill*  
*Berkeley Square, W.1*  
*Jan. 27th, '40*

MY DEAR JAMES,

I am writing this in one of the major crises of my life.

Last night I was taken by one of my cultured friends to see *Desire under the Elms*, and had one of the merriest evenings I have spent in the theatre for years. I knew what I was in for at the rise of the curtain. With the appearance of those two lumbering brothers, clearly recognisable as staunch Union men, and suffering, in common with all the males in the cast, from acute laryngitis and the delusion that every one else was stone deaf, I settled down in my seat for an orgy of chuckling.

And I was never let down for a moment. Not once did anyone fail, on emerging from the house, to roar or moan some glorious titbit of ' *Weltschmerz* ' into the branches of that astonishing elm outside. The rendering of " We're off to California in the morning " by the two Union lads was the best thing of its sort that I have seen since Harry Lauder (admittedly advantaged with his corkscrew stick) set the standard for all time with " Stop yer ticklin', Jock," at the Pavilion in my student days. But to my mind the best scene of all was the last.

" You didn't think I loved you," says Abbie, " did you ? Well, I've just killed baby. How about that ? " " You say you've killed baby ? Then by gum you're for it," says Eben. " I shall go and tell the sheriff—so there." And he goes.

A moment later the old gentleman comes downstairs, and, it being no less clear to him than to us that Abbie is upset, asks what is the matter.

" I've just killed baby. It was Eben's, and I wanted to show him how much I loved him. So it's sucks to you ! " says Abbie, with that misguided passion for confession which has maddened so many self-satisfied husbands.

" Then I shall go and tell the sheriff," says the old gentleman, supremely fulfilling my wildest hopes.

But what came next was even better.

" You needn't bother," says Abbie. " Eben's just gone for him."

" Good," says the old gentleman. " He's saved me the trouble."

Surely, James, that last line is the most powerful stimulus to belly-laughter that the mind of man has hitherto conceived ? I hugged myself with delight. But only one other member of the audience appeared to appreciate it. A grand fellow in naval uniform, who was sitting close behind me and had missed little of the fun already, gave a tremendous bellow of enjoyment. If he had been near enough I would have shaken him by the hand. I hope he has seen the Surrealist sideshow at the Academy. He is the sort of fellow to appreciate this no less ; and we cannot do enough to encourage stalwarts such as he, who are our last line of defence against pretentiousness and guff.

And now for my crisis. This is written on Saturday morning. If you fail me on Sunday, when you deal with this bait for the highbrowed fatheads, the most precious of my few remaining idols will have crashed. But I look to you, as a fellow-Lancastrian, with confidence.

Yours ever,

HAROLD DEARDEN

10 Fairfax Road, N.W.6  
February 2nd

MY DEAR HAROLD,

How clever of you not to let me get your letter until after my article had appeared ! *Desire under the Elms* is just

another example of the Higher Guff at its worst. What is the matter with O'Neill is that he will insist on being an artist, which means telling lies about facts. Synge told poetic lies about his peasants, O'Casey tells comic ones about his Dubliners, and both turn their lies into damned good plays. In *Desire* O'Neill tries to spiritualise a lot of cattle who just won't be spiritualised, and as he is technically a damned good playwright the trick comes off with the highbrows, who as a class are 100 per cent. spoofable, but not with vulgar fellows like you and me who can see behind and beneath the stagecraft.

Did you, by the way, get any of the Westminster Theatre's preliminary 'literature'? Here's a bit of it:

"It is now sixteen years since this play first 'shocked' the American public into realising that the fiercest passions of primitive people can be ennobled and given a new significance by an artist who believes unflinchingly in the ultimate 'innocence' of human nature. Eugene O'Neill is such an artist. In this daring and powerful play, in which lusty farming folk strive with elemental passion for the possession of land, the possession of money, the possession of a woman, it is not the weakness of the flesh, but the terrible strength and simplicity of primitive souls, that Eugene O'Neill reveals with the startling insight of a poet." Now I know something about " lusty farming folk," having lived many years on a farm in Derbyshire. I knew an old farmer who when his cows had worms sent for the vet., but himself endured that complaint for years because he was too mean to send for a doctor or pay for a bottle of medicine. Now let O'Neill apply his startling insight to that orifice and tell us how much of ennobling significance it revealed!

No! My experience of the peasant—who is the same all the world over—is that the only thing which differentiates him from his cattle is his cupidity and his cunning. The one writer who is right about them is Zola, who never makes the mistake of interpreting sub-normals insusceptible of interpretation. A bad smell with him is a bad smell, and not a perfume awaiting the right interpretative nose.

As I write Jock comes in with the *Manchester Guardian* and shows me this:

"Farming people who refused help to Maurice Ewart Cundiff (19), a clerk, of Crewe Avenue, Macclesfield, when he was exhausted during the severe weather, were strongly

criticised by the East Cheshire Coroner (Mr J. A. K. Ferns) on Wednesday.

"A companion of Cundiff, Edward Prendergast, of Manchester, described at the inquest at Macclesfield how he and Cundiff started out on Saturday afternoon for a walk. Cundiff became exhausted, and Prendergast went to several farms. He was refused help and told to go elsewhere. He had to make Cundiff as comfortable as he could by the wayside, and go for help.

"Recording a verdict of death by misadventure, the Coroner commented, 'I can only say that their conduct did not display that human feeling and willingness to help which one would expect from Englishmen, particularly in a country district, where they are accustomed to severe weather. It is clear that if this boy had been given succour and help he would be living now.'"

Macclesfield is next door to Chapel-en-le-Frith, where I used to live. And in my time I could have taken you to the farms where help would have been refused. But I have no doubt that the highbrow in O'Neill would see in what to plain people is monstrous inhumanity a further proof of the ultimate "innocence" of human nature.

Ever your  
JAMES

Feb. 3     Here from the *Times* Copenhagen correspondent Saturday. is the most moving thing the war has brought forth to date :

A judge of one of these courts told the correspondent that at Bromberg it was necessary to choose the largest square in the town for the executions. The heaps of corpses were allowed to lie there for several days as a warning to the population. Several persons of the lowest type were among those executed, the judge said : they were a miserable sight when they were placed against the wall, but there were also several heroes among them. The judge recalled in particular a young Pole who looked with an air of proud indifference straight into the rifle muzzles. Just before the volley was fired he stretched his hands towards heaven and shouted, "Poland is still not lost ! "

For several weeks after this execution the German judge, as he strolled about the streets of Bromberg, witnessed a

new game among the Polish children. He saw them playing at execution squads. The hero of the game was always a boy who, trembling with enthusiasm, stretched his hands towards heaven and cried, "Poland is still not lost!" Then he threw himself on the stones in imitation of the young Pole who had been executed. The Germans know that this game will be taken up all over Poland, and that the Polish people's hatred of them is inextinguishable.

*Feb. 5 To my great grief my old friend Monty Shearman Monday. died last night.*

*Feb. 8 St John Hutchinson writes in the Times : Thursday.*

The sudden death of Montague Shearman was a terrible shock to his many friends, and has left a feeling of blankness in their lives. In his early years, both at Oxford and at the Bar, he was a keen social student and politician, being a member of the Fabian Society, working at the Bermondsey Mission, and sitting on the L.C.C. as Progressive member for that constituency. During the last war he joined the Foreign Office, where he had remained ever since. It is as a personality that "Monty," as his friends knew him, will be so greatly missed. He possessed a keen sense of humour, always as ready to laugh at himself as at the foibles of others. He was the best of friends, and his dinner parties, to which he invited both the august of the Foreign Office and the young, did much to bring together experience and enthusiasm. As a cultivated collector of pictures he was known to all supporters of the modern movements. He was one of the earliest appreciators in this country of Matisse and Utrillo, and for a collector of not great wealth he had assembled a magnificent collection, including works of Renoir, Monet, Sisley, Matisse, Utrillo, Rouault, Vuillard, and Bonnard, and among the English painters Steer, Sickert, John, Gertler, Duncan Grant, and others.

He loved France and all things French; he was the perfect companion, sitting in the cafés of Paris, touring the galleries, motoring through the country, and commenting on the conglomeration of races to be seen at the Old Port at Marseilles, and watching the races at Longchamps. He was a perspicacious buyer of books, especially interesting him-



*Monty Shearman*



self in those with Cruikshank and Rowlandson illustrations. He had a profound knowledge of English literature, and even allowed himself to read the nineteenth-century classics, and the detective stories of England and France. An evening spent with him was always a delight—good talk, good food and wine, beautiful surroundings, and a charming and kindly companion. He was the most open-minded and tolerant of men, and one left his company feeling that not a moment had been wasted, and that one had had a fleeting glimpse of the most endearing side of the eighteenth century.

“Always ready to laugh at himself.” When I asked Monty why he gave up the Bar he said, “I was a poor advocate. I defended twelve murderers, and they were all hanged.” I suggested that they were guilty. Monty said, “Yes. But I prosecuted on twelve occasions. And they all got off !”

He was the ideal travelling companion, and during my many holidays with him I was frequently reminded of Johnson’s saying about Burke : “His stream of mind is perpetual.” I recall an absurd incident when we were returning from Marseilles. It was during a heat-wave. The first thing Monty did on getting into the railway-carriage was to divest himself of jacket and waistcoat. Leaving me to look after the valuables, he then strolled off to the bookstall, whereupon the train started in the characteristically casual way of all French trains. Appealing to the guard, I was told that actually the train was in two parts, the second following ten minutes later. Yes, both trains stopped at Avignon, and if my friend was quick he would be able to dart from one platform to the other. Alas, Monty’s bulk was not made for darting ! The same thing happened at Lyons, where it had become distinctly chilly. I realised that Monty was wearing the thinnest of silk shirts and light flannel trousers, and that I had all his money. Unrescued till the train got to Paris, he sat all night, dinnerless, and huddled in a blanket borrowed from a steward. Despite his great frame M. was never really strong, and I saw at once when we got to Paris that it was a case of hot brandy and bed.

There is nothing to add to Hutchy’s admirable account, except possibly a note as to Monty’s aloofness with those with

whom he was not intimate. With a mind richly and variously stocked he had great stores of reserve, and his friendship was not had for the asking. He demanded—how shall I put it?—*integrity* in his friends. He did not ask that they should be intellectual, for if you thought sincerely he did not mind how inadequate your apparatus for thinking was. Nor moral, for here his code began and ended with kindness towards and consideration for others. He was, as one could tell him to his face, something of a snob, and he would laughingly agree if by that you meant that he prized what Westminster and Balliol gave him. But try to get Monty to a rout merely because it was fashionable or expensive, and his contempt was freezing. He was not often angry, but his anger was a thing to be feared, and I never knew it roused unworthily. He inherited a fortune, and here he took a stand for which I immensely respected him. Money became a bugbear with him. He had this confidence in his friends—that they would have stuck to him if he had been penniless. And he repaid this confidence by leaving wealth out of his relationship with them. With this strength of mind he combined a great-hearted, spontaneous generosity. He dispensed charity abundantly, and by stealth. He was a good man.

Then there was “the Room.” This was where Monty, during his parents’ lifetime, entertained his friends and hung his pictures. It is fitting to say here that anything I know about modern painting was learned from the walls of the Room. Undivorceable from the Adelphi, Monty had three apartments in succession there, and not one of them was really more than one large room. In twenty years this became a tiny but genuine *salon*, where, around midnight, some of the best talk in London occurred. It was a great place for the hatching and mending of quarrels about the arts; there was a lot to drink, and nobody ever got drunk except on words and enthusiasms. If one heard one young artist say to another, “Are you going to the Room to-night?” one knew where he meant. And now there is no reason why any artist, young or old, should go near the Adelphi again. The Room was the last of eighteenth-century London.

Feb. 9 Apropos of blind spots in music Peter Page said *Friday*. to-day, "It's that neat and graceful little twirp Mozart who gets on *my* nerves!"

Feb. 10 "Ladies and gentlemen," said somebody in *Saturday*. Cochran's new revue last night, "I have the honour to announce Miss Cora Pearl!" Apparently the name meant nothing whatever to our younger critics chattering this morning about "the queen of a night-club in the days of bustles and crinolines," "an Edwardian music-hall artist," and so on. To-day's young know-alls do not seem to be aware that Cora was an actual person whose real name was Emma Elizabeth Crouch. Born at Plymouth in 1842, Emma was the sixteenth child of the ex-seaman and Westminster chorister Frederick William Crouch, composer of *Kathleen Mavourneen* and of two operas entitled *Sir Roger de Coverley* and *The Fifth of November*. Some time after the birth of Emma, Crouch deserted his wife and family and went to America, where he served in the Civil War on the side of the Confederation. (See Grove.) Emma at the age of eight was sent to a boarding-school at Boulogne. She stayed there five years, returned to London, appears to have served an industrious apprenticeship as a trollop, and at fifteen persuaded her lover, Bill Blinkwell, proprietor of a dance-hall, to take her to Paris, where she remained to become the greatest courtesan of the Second Empire and go to bed with everybody including Prince Jérôme Napoleon.

No two accounts of Cora agree. According to Charles A. Dolph, her father died in 1847 when Cora was five, whereas Grove gives the date of his death as 1896. Cora in her memoirs supports Dolph, alleging that her mother married again while she, Cora, was at school, "to have a supporter for the children of the past and a father for those of the future." Good for Mrs Crouch! Cora, according to a French journalist of the period, was possessed of "un chic merveilleux, un chien endiablé, un esprit blagueur, une rosserie supérieure et, par-dessus tout, une science de l'amour élevée à la hauteur d'un grand art et d'un culte surhumain." According to the

Baroness von Hutten, who wrote an excellent little life a few years ago, Cora wilfully accentuated her coarseness and vulgarity, which she raised to the power of a new mode—*le genre d'écurie*. An editorial note in the *Daily News* of July 17th, 1886, confirms this: “Cora had the manners of the stable.”

Leo Pavia, who is sitting with me as I write, tells me that Cora was a great friend of his Aunt Sophie (see my entry for November 6th, 1938). They met in 1867 at the Bouffes-Parisiens, where Offenbach’s *Orphée aux Enfers* was being revived, and Aunt Sophie was in the chorus. Of Cora’s part in this production Dolph says :

Cora wished to take the part of Cupid. All Paris was there to see and hear when she made her appearance in the scene on Olympus. A crown of roses was on her head, and her costume consisted of a short gauze tunic, very *décolletée*. When she began the well-known verses, with a strong English accent,

Je souis Kioupidonne, mon amor  
Ah fait l'école bouissonnière . . .

the noise was deafening, and drowned all further words. While the smart set applauded frantically, a number of students in the galleries, who had come to protest against “la morale outragée” and “imperial corruption,” began whistling and hooting. Cora replied by putting out her tongue and sneering at them. This went on every night for a week, the noise being heard outside in the Passage Choiseul, while the public paid fancy prices to see the show. Finally, one evening, Cupidon had enough of it, and advised the manager that she would not appear again.

Of Cora’s rapacity there has never been any doubt. I once saw in some American film-magazine a photograph of Theda Bara bending over a skeleton. Underneath was written, “She picks ‘em clean, does Theda !” So did Cora. There was a certain Baron Abel R. who, after Cora had turned him into a physical and financial wreck, left Paris and started a soap and candle factory at Cività Vecchia, near Rome. Alas for the Baron ! Let me quote my contemporary French journalist again: “Jamais mouton de fête-Dieu ne mit plus de complaisance a

se laisser conduire par son saint Jean-Baptiste que Gazonal à obéir à cette sirène." Let us hope that the poor plucked Baron had the wit of Balzac's Méridional and could say with him, "J'en ai eu pour mon argent." Then there was the millionaire son of a butcher. This infatuated youth, after squandering eight million francs on Cora, shot himself in her drawing-room. Whereupon, first complaining of the state of her carpet, Cora ordered her coupé and drove behind the stretcher to the hospital. But the young man did not die, living long enough to become head of the famous Restaurants Duval, founded by his father. The younger Duval died in 1922, when the London *Times* described him as "the last link between the Empire and the Republic. Everyone knew M. Duval, and everyone liked him. No première or race-meeting was complete without him. He wore the red ribbon of the Legion of Honour." Two days after the shooting incident Cora was expelled by the French Government, which, she said, was like banishing a public monument or a boulevard. She was subsequently turned out of Monaco, and years later returned to Paris to find that she had outlived her vogue. She died of cancer at the age of forty-four. Among the handful of people who followed her coffin were the Baron and the restaurateur! In her memoirs Cora states categorically that she never preferred one man to another, and that her interest in each and all of her lovers was confined to his bank-balance. In so far as her character had no redeeming features Cora was a Conqueress for whom Fielding would have claimed real Greatness. She kept the flag of British gallantry flying over Paris, according to the calculations of an actuary of the period, to the tune of fifteen million pounds! Nor is "over Paris" a mere metaphor. In Algar Thorold's life of Labouchere occurs this: "In another letter Labouchere gives an amusing picture of the worried English *chargé d'affaires* immersed in official trivialities: 'A singular remonstrance has been received at the British Embassy. In the Rue de Chaillot resides a celebrated English courtesan, called Cora Pearl, and above her house floats the English flag. The inhabitants of the street request the Ambassador of England, a country the purity

and decency of whose manners is well known, to cause this bit of bunting, which is a scandal in their eyes, to be hauled down. I left Mr Woodhouse consulting the text-writers upon international law, in order to discover a precedent for the case!'" This letter was written in 1870, during the Siege.

*Feb. 11 Rhyming slang in extremis. Navvy in hospital : Sunday.* "I know, doctor, wivart your tellin' me. I've got my lot. The old jam tart's finished!" And it was.

*Feb. 12 A correspondence. From George Jean Nathan : Monday.*

44 West 44th Street  
New York  
Jan. 27th, 1940

DEAR JAMES,

Tit for tat! Your own book, *The Amazing Theatre*, which I finished reading last night, re-establishes the fact that its author is England's best dramatic critic. The collected reviews are a valued addition to my Agate shelf.

Give Jock my best regards, and as soon as the Nazis are licked come over here again and join me over the drinks.

Yours ever,  
GEORGE

My reply :

Villa Volpone  
10 Fairfax Road  
London, N.W.6  
Feb. 12th, 1940

DEAR GEORGE,

"Even this repays me," as Antony said to What's-her-name. But why don't you come over and help us to lick the Nazis? I dare say there are as good drinks in the Old World as in the New. Take the next boat and let us investigate together.

Yours,  
JAMES

Feb. 13 More correspondence :  
Tuesday.

33 Leinster Road  
East Sheen, S.W.  
Feb. 12th, 1940

DEAR MR AGATE,

In the summer of 1937 I sent Mr Bernard Shaw the manuscript of a children's book, accompanied by coloured and black-and-white pictures ; he lost the book and the pictures.

The result was :

Eighteen letters and postcards.

Job as film extra in *Major Barbara*.

Part of the Newspaper Man in *The Doctor's Dilemma*.

Pair of his boots, brown—they fitted me perfectly.

A Jaeger cardigan, but sleeves had to be cut down.

Book on Karl Marx.

Autographed copy of *Man and Superman*.

Two and a half guineas as payment for article written  
about the first six letters.

£15 10s.

Mr Shaw has now had the boots mended for me, as I had  
worn them right down.

Now if I send the carbon copy of my book to you will you  
lose it ? If so what can I expect from you ?

KEREEL COLLINS

My reply :

10 Fairfax Road, N.W.6  
14th February, 1940

DEAR MR COLLINS,

You can expect :

Twenty-eight letters devised by my secretary, Jock.

Twenty-eight signatures forged by ditto.

Typewriter with letter 'e' missing.

Set of theatre programmes for 1908.

One horse.

Portrait of self with half of Evelyn Laye.

JAMES AGATE

Feb. 15 Harry Tate, who died yesterday, made his first  
Thursday. appearance as a dude waiting interminably out-  
side a stage-door. When at last the charmer

appeared, and Harry advanced to meet her, it was discovered that he had been standing on a manhole, the lid of which now revealed a swarthy giant swearing horribly. "What are you?" asked Harry. "I'm a sewer-man," said the giant. "Oh!" said Harry. "Then I think you're a *very common* sewer-man!" The stories about Harry are legion. I like best the one telling how, during the war of 1914-18, he was driving down to Plymouth with his company when he saw half a dozen wounded Tommies sitting on a gate. Stopping the car, he began an impromptu performance of "Motoring." This went on for some ten minutes without eliciting a smile. At last one of the youths took his cigarette out of his mouth and was heard to say, "Bloody fool—finks 'e's 'Arry Tate!" For Harry without his make-up was quite unrecognisable. Once, at a V.A.F. luncheon, I sat next to him without knowing who he was and proceeded to regale him with an account of his own performance the evening before. "Fishing" had been the sketch, and I told how H.T. had inadvertently thrown ground-bait at the red-nosed man with the bowler-hat two sizes too small, how the red-nosed man resented this, how H.T. said he had mistaken him for a swan, how the aggrieved assistant said, "Do I look like a swan?" and how H.T. had roared, "Not now you've turned round!" Not a muscle in Harry's face moved, and all he said was, "Must have been very funny!" He was difficult to talk to because he did not listen, being too busy with intellectual gestation of his own, the labour pains ending nine times out of ten in some quite unintelligible recondity. On the stage his humour was forthrightness-itself, and closely related to real life. In the sketch about Big Business he came into the office and roared, "Any letters?" On being told no he said, "Then we must write some!" Taking up a parcel, he asked, "What's in this?" And when the office-boy answered, "Don't know, sir," he banged it on the table with the command "Send it to Milan!" This marriage of imbecility and observation was the core of Harry's fun, which swept like a great gale through the British music-hall for forty years. His passing recalls some moving words by Leigh Hunt on the death of Elliston: "The death

of a comic artist is felt more than that of a tragedian. He has sympathised more with us in our everyday feelings, and has given us more amusement. Death with a tragedian seems all in the way of business. Tragedians have been dying all their lives. They are a 'grave' people. But it seems a hard thing upon the comic actor to quench his airiness and vivacity—to stop him in his happy career—to make us think of him, on the sudden, with solemnity—and to miss him for ever. We could have 'better spared a better man.' It is something like losing a merry child. We have not got used to the gravity."

*Feb. 16* The French actor Molé once said, "Je ne suis pas *Friday*. content de moi ce soir ; je me suis trop livré, je ne suis pas resté mon maître ; j'étais entré trop vivement dans la situation ; j'étais le personnage même, je n'étais plus l'acteur qui le joue. J'ai été vrai comme je le serais chez moi ; pour l'*optique* du théâtre il faut l'être autrement." If *l'optique du théâtre* means theatre in terms of the eye, why not *l'aurique du théâtre*, or theatre in terms of the ear? Regard for both might have saved the revival of Clifford Bax's *The Venetian*, which I thought a good play nine years ago, but which to-night seemed pretentious and rather silly. Bianca Capello was Margaret Rawlings's first big part, and her black tresses, sulphurous airs, and *tones to match* were exactly right for that sixteenth-century Florentine puss. Sylvia Coleridge, who played the part to-night, gave Clifford's young woman *un petit air sainte nitouche* accentuated by a light, high-pitched voice! The first Bianca promised great fun in bed; the second reminded me of Cayley Drummle's description of the first Mrs Tanqueray. The result was Kensington 1893 instead of Florence 1574.

*Feb. 17* At the Café Royal the talk was all of the rescue *Saturday*. by the destroyer *Cossack* of the 311 Britons from the Nazi prison-ship *Altmark*. Happening on the very day the *Exeter* arrived home, this is a rounding off as a great story-teller might have imagined it. Let me recapitulate. The *Graf Spee*'s prisoners reveal that their comrades on the

Nazi "hell-ship" *Altmark* are being subjected to semi-starvation and every kind of ill-treatment and indignity. The Navy makes a vow to 'get' the prisoners. Weeks pass, and the *Altmark* treks north, skirting the icebergs and dodging across to Norway, where she begins to fiddle her way home. The prisoners continually throwing messages into the sea, they are battened down under iron hatches. An attempt at mutiny fails, and the men are put on bread and water. At Bergen the ship is searched by the Norwegian authorities, who either do not want to hear the shouts of the confined men or cannot hear because the *Altmark*'s captain orders the steam-winches to be turned on to drown the shouting. One morning a young airman somewhere in England is hiked out of bed and told to find the *Altmark*. He succeeds, Nature showing where her sympathy lies by producing a day of brilliant visibility. The airman tips the wink to a British cruiser and five destroyers, "conveniently disposed," according to the Admiralty. Argument with two Norwegian torpedo-boats. Will they search the *Altmark* in conjunction with the British? No. Our men wireless the Admiralty, who reply, "Go in and get the boys." The *Altmark*'s abortive attempt to ram, the boarding and the hand-to-hand fight in the manner of a hundred years ago, the rescue, the transfer to the *Cossack* of 311 prisoners, some having to be carried, the snatching by an A.B. of the *Altmark*'s skipper's cap, the discovery that that amiable swine had meant to blow up the ship *with the prisoners on board*, the arrival at Leith—all this is pure Marryat! The thing about to-day's news which has fired the mind of the nation is the appearance of the Nelson touch in high places. "Go in and get the boys," the Admiralty ordered, leaving the nice question of territorial waters to be argued later.

Feb. 18 Took up Elizabeth Robins's *Both Sides of the Sunday. Curtain* hoping to solve the old question of whether she was a good actress or merely a good Ibsenite actress. These memoirs, which ought to have been fascinating, Burke the question by stopping short at the year 1890, when R. had failed to become fashionable and was about to take

on the new Ibsen craze—as monstrous a fobbing-off as Mrs Campbell's would have been if she had ended her autobiography in the year before *Tanqueray*.

Eight years ago R. published another book, called *Theatre and Friendship*. This consisted of the correspondence between R. and Henry James, which ought to have been refurbished for the present volume. It happens at the time when Ibsen is sending over *The Master Builder* in untranslated snippets of quarter-scenes at a time, and Norse grammars and dictionaries hurtle through the air. The publishing and performing rights have been bought on spec., and it appears to the aghast disciples that the great man is spoofing them. Thus R. will write to Mrs Hugh Bell, "Henry James comes Tuesday of next week to hear if the Ibsen heroine has appeared yet and what she's like. He'll faint when he hears! Has a knapsack on her back, rug in a shawl-strap, and alpenstock! How I hate her!!! " And then on the outside of the envelope: "Second instalment to-day. More in the dark than ever—think the old man's stark mad." Mrs Bell replies that she is "frantically interested . . . I don't like your young tourist, but, after all, she may be called upon to do all sorts of splendid things! In the meantime I feel that by this day week the question will be settled one way or the other, this question that has been a part of one's life since the summer. . . . Write, write to me." Henry James then weighs in: "It is all most strange, most curious, most vague, most horrid, most 'middle-classy' in the peculiar, ugly, Ibsen sense. What is already clear is that a *man* is the central figure. And the man, alas, an elderly, white-haired architect, is, although a strange and interesting, a fearfully *charmless* creature. It doesn't as yet begin to shape itself as a play, an action—but only as an obscure and Ibseny tale, or psychological picture, requiring infinite elucidation. There are three women: an old wife, an anæmic girl, a young female accountant with a green shade over her eyes. . . ." In the meantime William Archer and Edmund Gosse exchange cartels in the public Press, and G.B.S. warms his heels and cools his impatience by cycling round Battersea Park. With the later acts the excitement

grows, and Henry James writes, "Is it finished, and when can a fellow see it?" This is the full measure of sensation, that the most convoluted of word-spinners can descend to such a sentence: "When can a fellow see it?" Recovering, H.J. invites himself to supper, and suggests that a mere bun will do—"if there be such a thing as a mere bun." Finally the play is produced, as William Archer writes, "not, certainly, with enthusiasm, but with decent courtesy and no more than reasonable indignation."

This exciting correspondence has, to my chagrin, been discarded by the Robins, who substitutes a lengthy and comparatively uninteresting account of how in her attempts to get on the professional stage she unsuccessfully badgered Irving, the Kendals, Tree, and George Alexander. I gather that on the whole R. wanted to be a fashionable actress in fashionable plays. She gets an offer to act with Benson, and her immediate reaction is to cry, "What *good* would it do me to play Ophelia in Exeter?" Janet Achurch never asked what good it would do her to play Nora in Manchester. Some of the stories are entertaining, and there is this beautiful one to be added to my notes on Benson: "I was not pleased with my Portia, nor consoled by congratulations, but I liked Mr Benson even before he electrified me by winding up the matinée with an athletic display after the final curtain, as he thought, had come safely down. There was Benson caught in the act—an act as little in keeping with Shylock as with his own grave, classic face—Jewish gaberdine clutched about him, long legs in the air executing a flying leap over the judge's seat and coming down greatly astonished before an equally astonished house that was giving him an extra curtain call." The reader is left to imagine what good that did Mr Benson in Exeter!

*Feb. 20* I have always thought that Garbo was a great *Tuesday*. screen-actress—nothing will induce me to call a woman an *actress* until I have seen her on the stage proper!—magnificent along Duse's lines, but also capable of making successful raids into the Bernhardt country. A superb moper, she has for me passed the Bernhardt test in a dozen

films including, if you please, *La Dame aux Camélias*. Judge, then, of my surprise when on going to the Empire to see *Ninotchka* I found my hopes in Garbo disappointed, and the critics' dithyrambs wildly unfulfilled! For half an hour she is glum in the stereotyped Garbo fashion, and then she is supposed to laugh and doesn't! She opens her mouth wide and goes through the motions of laughing, but it is mirthless laughter, like the yawning of a horse. The rest is a not more than competent performance in polished comedy, in the course of which Ina Claire plays Garbo off the screen. The film itself is in Lubitsch's wittiest vein.

*Feb. 21* Attended Vic-Wells Ball at Covent Garden last *Wednesday*. night. Not many Shakespeareans present. Jock having given me the day off, I slept till 3 P.M., and then, for a little treat, took a bus to Mill Hill, where I walked about. While I was having coffee in the back room of a little teashop I heard somebody come to the counter and a woman's voice say, "Do you sell sausage-rolls for babies?" Apropos of babies I heard the other day of a smart woman who, being congratulated on her safe delivery, said, "It's a great relief having one's stomach to oneself!"

*Feb. 22* Emlyn Williams couldn't attend his own first-*Thursday*. night to-night—*The Light of Heart* at the Apollo —because he is acting in his other play, *The Corn is Green*. Surely there are occasions when the understudy might be put on, unless, of course, the Diderot School is right in thinking that a competent actor can give his performance with his mind elsewhere. I suppose the situation in Emlyn's dressing-room to-night must have been something like this: 7.50 P.M. Messenger dashes in saying that rival playwrights Terence Rattigan and Rodney Ackland have arrived. After which the reports go off like minute-guns. Margaret Rawlings, Constance Cummings, and Merle Oberon have entered the theatre. Sir Hugh Walpole has started to beam. Sir Edward Marsh has started to cry. Cecil Beaton has brought three Duchesses. All the critics except Agate are in their seats.

Basil Dean is whispering to Victoria Hopper. The curtain is going up. And so on, until it is time for Emlyn to make his entrance on the Piccadilly stage. Now how is it possible that an author-actor, with all this ringing in his ears, can concentrate on saying, "How far is it, Evan *bach*, from Carnedd Llewellyn to Carnedd Dafydd, look you, so they tell me?" Worse than this, fancy having to go on for a scene of heart-rending pathos when you have just been told that at the other theatre the critic of the *Sunday Times* is fast asleep!

Emlyn appears to write his plays in the way in which Mr Wemmick got married. "Here's a church! Here's Miss Skiffins! Let's have a wedding!" Emlyn goes to Covent Garden and says to himself, "Here's a staircase! Here's a flat full of Skiffinses! Let's have a play!" His talent, as I see it, is not for playwriting, but for depicting the Skiffinses of to-day, which he does admirably. Too admirably. His gift for eking out plays with amusing minor characters means that he needn't bother about his major drama, and he doesn't. Edgar Baerlein once told me that he would have been world-champion at racquets if it had not been for his extraordinary length of wrist: "It gets me out of difficulties which, without it, I shouldn't dare to get into!" Emlyn's lesser personages are his length of wrist. In to-night's play there were five minor characters each of which was ten times more alive than the three major ones.

But why does Emlyn drag in real people? The impresario is categorically stated to be Cochran and the producer of *King Lear* John Gielgud, while there is an allusion to an "offer from Edith Evans." That C.B. should take Covent Garden Theatre to present a notoriously unreliable toper as Lear seems to me to be a libel on my old friend's astuteness. Besides, can't Emlyn see that to introduce real people into an imaginary world is as devastating to the *optique du théâtre* as if a horse were to walk on to the stage?

*Feb. 27* Went with Peter Page to hear *The Barber of Seville* reasonably well revived at Sadler's Wells. Peter deserting me for the gout, I supped after-

wards at Rules with Bertie van Thal, Dickie Clowes, and Jock, also fresh from Rossini. These three agreed unanimously that Peter and I, sitting together, had been remarkably like Don Basilio and Don Bartolo. Playing the current game of Quiz, Jock suddenly fired at us this astonishing list of Overtures. Bertie, not less astonishingly, gave their composers correctly and on the nail, at which Dickie and I could only goggle: *Waverley*, *Die Schöne Melusine*, *Le Pré aux Clercs*, *Le Chevalier Breton*, *Le Roi l'a Dit*, *The Siege of Corinth*, *The Siege of Rochelle*, *Raymond*, *Di Ballo*, *Froissart*, *Sakuntala*, *La Patrie*, *Les Abencérages*, *The Corsair*.

Feb. 29 A "buffer" luncheon party at the Ivy to Benno Thursday. Moiseiwitsch and Stanley Rubinstein, the idea being that Benno's presence would prevent me talking finance with Stanley, while Stanley would keep me from boring Benno with my views about piano-playing. Only semi-successful, Stanley referring to fresh income-tax demands for sur-tax dating back to 1933! "This is the last straw!" said I. "Let me go bankrupt!" Whereupon Benno said, "The trouble with you, Jimmie, is that you want to get into the papers!" Whereupon I there and then produced and read an extract from a letter received this morning: "When next you see Benno Moiseiwitsch and his wife ask them if they remember Mrs Eddie Solomon, who with her husband came on board after M.'s recital and had supper with them and Captain Wells at Rangoon. I was deputising for the *Rangoon Times* reporter that night, and M. lent me his Press-book and helped me to write the glowing account of his recital which appeared in next evening's *Times*." Benno recollected this event perfectly. The letter went on: "How would you like to hear the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto played by a Chinese? This happened during my stay in Rangoon, and the orchestra consisted of Europeans, Burmese, Indians, and Filipinos under a Swiss conductor. A very good job they made of it too! I played the Schumann Piano Concerto with the same orchestra." Stanley asking me how *Ego 4* was progressing, I said, "About ninety thousand words done. Enough to

publish if a bomb drops on me to-morrow." Stanley said, "What an ending!"

*March 1* Spring-cleaning, also stocktaking. It occurs to me *Friday*. that I ought to authenticate my

#### WALKING-STICKS

*Henry Irving*. Given me by D. A. Clarke-Smith and Audrey Lucas, who had it from E.V.

*John Hare*. Given me by Fred Leigh, who had it from Patrick Ward, the singer, who got it from the brother, living at Bath, of a Dr Dyke, or Dykes, of London. This is inscribed "John Hare, from A.W.P. 24th April, 1889." The date is that of the first performance of Pinero's *The Profligate*, in which Hare played Lord Dangars. I remember seeing Hare walking with this stick in Albert Square, Manchester, some time in the nineties.

*Harry Lauder*. Given me by Barry Lupino.

*Vesta Tilley*. Also given me by Barry L. Carried by V.T. in *Algy*, which means that I have seen it scores of times.

*W. E. Gladstone*. The donor's father was a retainer in the Gladstone family.

*Emperor Franz Joseph*. Bought for £1 in an antique shop at Lewes. Dealer said he had it from a pawnshop in Brighton, where it had been pledged by a waiter who confessed to having stolen it from a hotel in Vienna. Dealer not prepared to give guarantee, but said that this was his information, and that personally he believed it to be correct.

*Knobkerrie*. Given me by George Robey, who had it from a Zulu who fashioned it out of a club used by his grandfather in the war with Cetewayo.

*March 4* It has been left to me to make the most exciting *Monday*. literary find since the Baron Corvo letters. The details of how this discovery came about are un-

important. The find consists of seventeen diaries and notebooks kept by a young man of good birth and education moving in the best social and artistic circles, and who committed suicide at the age of twenty-six. They contain a frank, detailed, fully documented, and quite unprintable account of the erotic life of London, Paris, and Rome during and just after the last war. Names, dates, and places are given, and wherever I have been able to check the author I have found complete accuracy. Even the pictures at the hotel in the Rue de l'Arcade, where I was once privileged to see the coat-tails of Marcel Proust vanishing through a doorway, are correctly described. Since it is unthinkable that nothing should remain of a young man who possessed not only a fine and sensitive mind, but also a literary style of extraordinary directness and clarity, I here rescue and present as an intaglio all that is publishable. The journals are prefaced with two quotations :

I cannot help praising myself. There will be no papers found after my death—no diaries—containing disagreeable stories about people and telling all that I have seen and heard of strange things. I resolved from the first that there should be an instance of a man who saw and heard much that was deeply interesting, but private, and who could hold his tongue, and restrain his pen, for ever.

SIR ARTHUR HELPS, author of *The Life of the Prince Consort*, editor of *Leaves from a Journal of our Life in the Highlands*.

Il ne faut pas demander aux hommes d'être infâmes au-dessus de leurs forces.

RÉMY DE GOURMONT

### INTAGLIO

*Sanctuary Beauty.* One day when X. was at the Oratory with Y. they saw an acolyte come in carrying an enormous candle. The acolyte was exactly like me. X. leant over to Y. and asked him whether he did not see the likeness. "Yes," said Y. "Beauty like that grows only in sanctuaries."

*The Waxwork Face.* P. tells me that I am exactly like the waxwork figure of Katharine of Aragon at Madame Tussaud's.

*G.'s Theory of Love-making.* G. has started a horrible theory, which he says was told him as a fact by a scientist, that a man can only make love three thousand times in his life. I pointed out that this was ridiculous, because at that rate every one would be impotent at the age of twenty-two.

M. always has his pockets stuffed with letters from Italian officers, English shopmen, German soldiers, Madeleine choir-boys, and heaven knows who else ! These letters are generally about the philosophy of vegetarianism, Byzantine architecture, the applicability of the metaphysics of Bergson to the pictures of Matisse, and similar subjects.

*The Makeshift.* My cousin, who left me £2000 and the gold sleeve-links which I always wear, once said to my mother, " Life is only a makeshift." The remark was not new, but it was deeply felt. My cousin knew as much about metaphysics as any living man. He had met De Quincey in Edinburgh when he was young. He had once been married, but his wife died almost immediately, and he had no children. Since then he had grown old in lodgings, reading papers to the Aristotelian Society from time to time. Towards the end of his life all the members of the Aristotelian Society used to get up and go out when he started to read a paper ; and not long before his death his solitude was so great that he was deeply touched by a schoolboy letter I wrote him. I did not, as a matter of fact, know about the £2000 ; and I wrote because he was old and because he had known De Quincey. My mother went to see him, and found him so weak that he could not get up from his chair. He said that I had written him as nice a letter as anyone could wish to receive. He had got the letter in his pocket ; and he took it out and read extracts to my mother. His books now survive only in college libraries and second-hand bookshops ; and his personal memory, I suppose, only in two or three minds. Be that as it may, those among my friends for whom I have a great secret sympathy all look upon life as a makeshift.

G. says that when common soldiers are in trouble they say, " Toute la misère n'est pas chez les riches."

*Sanctified Corpses.* This afternoon I went to Santa Maria

Maggiore and saw the sarcophagus which opens and discloses the mummified body of Pius IV. The coffin seemed to be a little too small, and the body is hunched up. The decomposed face is covered with a silver mask, and the pulpy hands are dressed in white silk gloves. Those decayed lips and limp hands once excommunicated the English Queen Elizabeth, bastard, heretic, and usurper. R. said, "If you have a well-developed sense of the macabre you ought to see the skeleton bride. You see, lying in a niche, a figure dressed in the most wonderful silver brocade. The face and the hands are bones. You ought also to see the embalmed body of San Carlo Borromeo at Milan. You go down into a crypt which is literally lined with precious stones. A man comes up and asks you whether you want to see the body of the saint. You say yes, and pay five francs. The monk disappears, and you hear a frightful grating sound. Then, through the darkness, you see the monk turning a gigantic handle. Again there is a fearful metallic noise, as if the gates of hell were opening, and suddenly you see one whole silver wall of the crypt drop like a Roman stage-curtain. Before you stands a huge glass-faced sarcophagus made of the most precious materials, and in it, erect, a body swathed in stiff, dazzling ecclesiastical robes. At the top a brown noseless face stares at you."

Mrs Y. and a foreign archæologist were contemplating an obscene picture of Leda and the Swan in a museum one day, when the foreign archæologist giggled foolishly and gave her to understand that the attitude was indecent. "Why, what's wrong?" said Mrs Y. "It's only a bird, isn't it!" Mrs Y. is very highly prized in Roman society for her unrestrained belchings and stomach-rumbles, during and after meals. Belching seems to be characteristic of intellectual women. Just as Mrs Y. used to belch when she was discoursing on baroque art, so Mrs H. belched when she talked about the Irish question, and Lady C. gave a great belch when she described her favourite theosophical medium to me.

R., at Bournemouth, finding himself in possession of a copy of *Oscariana*, which bored him, put it into the pocket of a Brigadier-General's British-warm which was hanging up in the cloakroom of an hotel.

One of the attachés of the French Embassy was bathing with his newly wedded bride on the Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus,

when a squad of raw Turkish soldiers supervened. They seized the couple and outraged à *tour de rôle* both the attaché and his wife. These two, when released, returned to their hotel as if nothing had happened, but were horrified to find that everyone knew of their escapade. People with field-glasses on the deck of one of the Bosphorus steamers, too far away to help, had watched the whole drama and recognised the protagonists. The attaché was transferred to another capital as the incident was thought to prejudice the dignity of the French Republic.

One morning I was lying in the grass on the hillside overlooking the Bosphorus, in a sort of enclosed space with a free view that will live in my mind. Suddenly I heard a rustling in the long grass. I looked, and I saw a huge tortoise running towards me, pursued by a second tiny tortoise. And then I watched breathless, immobile; for the big tortoise stopped, and drew in its head. The little one came up to it, and, taking a run, violently charged the opening in the shell where the head should have been. Then he retired, and charged the four holes in the shell for the legs, and finished up with the tail. Then he repeated the whole process. And then he climbed on to Madame's back—for the big one was Madame—and Madame's head gradually peeped out more and more. And then suddenly Monsieur gave a hoarse little shriek, and a horny orange tongue shot out from his gaping mouth, while Madame's head came out to its full length and looked round. I had fulfilled one of my life's ambitions—to witness the copulation of two tortoises. I picked up the little creatures and carried them down to a portion of the terrace completely surrounded by railings and rocks, and entered by steps unscaleable to tortoises. There I imprisoned them, and summoned D. to see them; but though we gave them every encouragement, they never recovered their first fine careless rapture. Perhaps the grass was too short.

*A.'s Family.* In the summer of 1917 I went to luncheon at A.'s grandmother's. The whole of A.'s family was there, including his father, a large taciturn man with a red moustache. There were almost innumerable aunts and uncles, who looked like tapeworms dressed up in second-hand clothes. One uncle with rather a nervous, almost insane smile devotes his whole time to the rearing of some gigantic and very ferocious bloodhounds. A.'s father takes no interest in anything except goldfish.

There are some men who are absolutely of their time: every one of whose ideas, every point in whose style can be traced to definite influences; and who yet, when everything has been explained away, leave a residue of something unknown before or after. That is originality; that is genius; and such men are Poe, Piranesi, and Keats.

Whenever I pass a row of monotonous, uniform houses, like the Bloomsbury district of London, or the Neustadt of Dresden, or the Via Po of Rome, I always imagine that if one knocked at one of the doors one would be admitted into a palace full of African, Mexican, and Chinese splendours.

The noblest ambition of the human mind is the desire to reconstruct the external world in the semblance of the picture which we carry inside the mind and call the imagination. The first condition required is isolation from disturbing influences. There is only a difference of degree between the Egyptian nation, living superbly alone for tens of centuries in an inaccessible hall decorated to their taste—a hall whose ceiling was the blue sky and whose walls were the sandstone cliffs of the desert—and the brothers Goncourt, locked up in the house at Auteuil where they had recreated the gay imaginary eighteenth century which they carried in their brain. Make another step and you get to Poe, recreating in a single room—or on a sheet of paper—or in a glass of brandy—the world where his imagination had its permanent home.

*Monstres.* I had dinner with Q., who said that there really was a man with an elephant's trunk in London. He also said that in Nottingham there is a family of fox-headed children. Some one walking down a street saw three little girls with foxes' heads looking out of a window at him.

*Le Mot Juste.* L. told me that the word Henry James used to him about Mrs Humphry Ward was 'constipated.'

*Marinetti in Chelsea.* L., with whom I had dinner, said he was present once at a *conférence* given by Marinetti in London. When it was over a little old lady from Chelsea in a black bonnet with jet ornaments came up to Marinetti's tribune and said, "I am so glad to have seen you, for your words remind me of the paintings of an artist whom I greatly admire—a man called Gauguin." Marinetti leaped down from his tribune

and screamed, "Gauguin est mort"; after which he slowly circled round her with tripping steps, repeating, "Gauguin est mort, Gauguin est mort." The old lady raised a black silk parasol with a black lace frill which she held in her hand and gaily poked Marinetti with it.

*A Funeral Party.* One day at Marseilles G. saw a funeral party which had captured the whole of a tramcar. They were all carrying bead wreaths and metal flower crosses, and they had endless fun climbing on to the roof of the tramcar, throwing the artificial flowers at each other, and singing comic songs. Later on he met the coffin on a first-class *pompes funèbres* car which was being driven at a breakneck speed up the hill. No one was following it.

*Matisse Revisited.* We went to Nice to see Matisse, and found him in the Hôtel de la Méditerranée, on the Promenade des Anglais. He was wearing a pepper and salt suit heavily tinged with dung colour, a blue shirt with a surface like crackleware porcelain and with tiny white spots like tufts of cotton wool, and a tie like the skin of certain lizards or of a Lochleven trout. His beard was still of a greyish, mousy, reddish colour, and his eyes were intelligent and kindly beneath their spectacles in his broad bourgeois face.

His room was long, high, and narrow, like a passage, and at the far end were a window and a balcony facing on the sea. All the walls were covered with sketches and unfinished pictures. He showed us a great many line drawings, which were the work of a great artist. He also showed us some shaded drawings in the style of Leonardo, Ingres, and Titian. One showed a model sitting on a sofa with her skirt raised so as to show one leg bare to the hip. "Vous voyez, j'ai levé la jupe pour dessiner le contour de la jambe," Matisse hastened to say. . . .

G. said we had just been reading Ambroise Vollard's book on Cézanne. Matisse said that he did not like the book, and that Vollard was trying to make fun of Cézanne and to describe him as stupid, narrow-minded, and cantankerous. "Cézanne was not like that at all," he said. "Now if Vollard had drawn a picture like that of Degas he would have had more justification. There was really something disagreeable and inhuman about Degas. I can remember when Durand-Ruel's daughter was married. Durand-Ruel asked Degas to be witness, and

the bride came into the salon on Degas's arm. There were some flowers on the table. 'Enlevez ces fleurs coupées,' said Degas. 'Je n'aime pas des cadavres morts dans des vases.'"

M. once met Degas at dinner. She had some scent on her handkerchief. Degas began sniffing, and said, "There is some one in the room with scent ; either the scent or she must go ! " M. said "C'est moi ! " and produced her handkerchief. "Eh bien, jetez votre mouchoir," said Degas. M. obeyed.

I looked at the books on Matisse's table. There were some lives of musicians by Romain Rolland, *L'Immoraliste*, by André Gide, *Mort de Quelqu'un*, by Jules Romains, Théophile Gautier's *Voyage à Constantinople*, the *Orlando Furioso* in a French translation, and the *Fables* of La Fontaine.

Soon after five the model came in. She was very pretty and sad-faced, with a very white skin and faint freckles, a straight nose, and intelligent turquoise-green eyes. G. was very much impressed with her.

Matisse said, "Vous voyez, mes journées sont très monotones. Le matin je me lève, et je travaille. Après le déjeûner je me repose un peu ; puis je reprends le travail. A cinq heures il y a le modèle qui arrive, et je travaille jusqu'au dîner. Après le dîner je suis bien content de me coucher. Mais l'autre soir je me promenais au bord de la mer, et j'ai vu un bateau qui partait pour la Corse avec toutes ses lumières allumées. Alors, j'ai eu bien envie de partir. J'ai tiré ma montre, et j'ai vu que j'avais le temps de prendre mon billet, et je me suis dit que je pourrais acheter des chemises en arrivant là-bas. Mais je n'avais pas beaucoup d'argent avec moi, et puis je n'avais pas le temps d'aviser à l'hôtel ici, alors j'y ai renoncé. Mais j'avais bien envie de partir quand-même."

*The Scholar at his Sister's Funeral.* X. told me to-day that Z., the scholar, suffered from a vile digestion and punctuated his meals with powerful eructations. Z. once attended the funeral of his sister. An old friend who saw him there expressed surprise that he should have undertaken such an exacting duty. "I had to," said Z. "She compiled the index to my Greek Anthology."

*The Fine Old Staircase.* When Queen Victoria paid a visit to Eton after the Jubilee she was taken to see the Rev. E. D. Stone's house. She said nothing as she went round the house,

minutes of arriving at the station I had seen and taken a furnished flat for one year. In the train back to town suddenly remembered having omitted to replace my thermogene wool, which I have been wearing back and front for weeks. The Quiz being popular, this suggests : What novel begins with one character advising another to discard his chest-protector? Answer : Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pécuchet*.

*March 6* Taking up the *Radio Times* yesterday afternoon, *Wednesday*, I saw that an hour previously, while Jock and I were at work, this concert was being broadcast :

1.15. The Manchester Tuesday Midday Society's Concert from the Houldsworth Hall, Manchester. A pianoforte recital by Franz Osborn.

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Rhapsody in G minor, Op. 79                                       | Brahms       |
| Nocturne in C sharp minor, Op. 27,                                |              |
| No. 1   | Chopin       |
| Seven Interludes  | Edward Agate |
| Allegro grazioso—Con spirito—Andante languido—Andante teneramente |              |
| —Allegro scherzando—Lento piangevole—Allegretto scherzando        |              |
| Sonata in F minor, Op. 57 (The <i>Appassionata</i> )              | Beethoven    |

Not even Edward could have complained of his company! The tragedy was that in the press of work I had forgotten all about the recital. A little consoled to read in this morning's *Manchester Guardian*, "These miniatures, some quiet, others of a freakish type, have considerable charm. The composer is probably too cosmopolitan and too well versed in other men's music to free himself entirely from derivative influences. Yet the stamp of originality is on much that is found in his pieces, and the writing is pianistic."

*March 7* A good war-time maxim : No day without its *Thursday*. laugh! To-day has handed me a good one. This was when the *D.E.* got through to say that the

office censor would not pass my article about how I spent last Sunday at Bognor. " 'Twas brillig, and the Bognor kids did gyre and gimble in the wabe" was the offending sentence. Didn't I realise that this was a clear indication that last Sunday had been a fine day? Didn't I know that there must be no indication as to weather conditions until after ten days? So I changed "last Sunday" into "a couple of Sundays ago," and all was well!

*March 8* Ernest Newman's claim that *The Beggar's Opera Friday*. is music and not drama relieves me of the task of sitting malevolently through the revival at the Haymarket. Because John Gielgud, who produces, doesn't want to seem to ape Nigel Playfair, the date has been put forward a hundred years and the piece re-dressed so that Peachum's world becomes Fagin's. As Damon Runyon would say, I practically care for no part of this. I detest the modern mania for finding wrong-headedness 'fun.' "My dear, he's making King Lear wear a Burberry and waders. Won't it be fun?" "My sweet, Lady Macbeth makes her first entrance on skis. Won't that be amusing?" "Lucy Lockit is to look like Miss Snellicci in *Nicholas Nickleby*! Won't that be just too wizard?" Yet John's way of being original could have been easy enough. He had only to stage the eighteenth century as it really was, and *give it back its dirt*, modelling Polly's costume on that of Miss Tishy Snap as given in the ninth chapter of the first book of *Jonathan Wild*. "Hogarth, by God!" shouted a gentleman in the pit at an early performance of Gay's work. The verdict on last night seems to have been "Dickens, by Gielgud!"

*March 9* Went last night to *Belle View*, a play by Francis *Saturday*. James based on the Rattenbury murder. Performance possible because the Chanticleer is a private theatre and members can defy the Lord Chamberlain at the cost of a few shillings a year. I saw this trial, and remember thinking how irrelevant most of it must have seemed to the protagonists. Do you identify this suit?

Were these the pyjamas? (Mrs R. had given her chauffeur-lover a new rig-out, which meant calling the tailor and haberdasher as witnesses.) Probably it is only in such details that Old Bailey proceedings can have any correspondence to the drama as known to the participants. To a man and a woman overtaken by Justice while still in the throes of a grand passion the court's grasp of essentials must seem ludicrously weak. I should have perfectly understood if at any time in the proceedings Mrs R. had banged the dock-ledge and shouted to the court, "Yes, that's how such-and-such a thing seems to you *now*. But can't you see that it isn't in the least like the way it seemed to us *then*?" Or if, when asked how she, a woman in the thirties, could allow herself to fall in love with a boy of eighteen, she had rounded on her tormentor and said, "Suppose you were tied up to a woman old enough to be your mother? Suppose you fell in love with your secretary? Sentence me if you like, but don't ask imbecile questions!" Mrs R., and anybody else in her situation, might well plead that poetic questions cannot abide prose answers—an arguable view, given that lovers, ecstatic to the point of murder, must to themselves be romantic figures moving on a different plane from that of cut-and-dried depositions, rules of evidence, and all the rest of it. This must be so, since, while a tragedy is psychological, any court reconstruction can only be factual. And, of course, there is always the difficulty of explaining sex to a jury which shuts its mind to it, and a judge who has forgotten it. That Mrs R. was a tragic figure and not a mere slut was proved by her subsequent suicide.

*March 10 To Bognor and Auckland—"last, loneliest, love-Sunday. liest, exquisite, apart"—with Leo Pavia, having sent Charles on ahead. This is the new boy, who seems to be the right sort—"My name's Charlie, but I answer to anything!" Nineteen, and cannot be called up for a year. Leo in great form. "I'm sixty-five to-day. For the first five years they despised of my life; for the last fifty it's my death they've despised of!" I asked him about Elizabeth Robins's quality as an actress. He said, "When I saw Robins*

I was in my teens, and the impact of Ibsen was so great that it wouldn't have mattered if Hilda Wangel had been played by Louie Freear ! ” But he was very cross indeed with a young film critic who has been scorning the notion of casting Robert Taylor for the part of Brahms in a picture about Clara and Robert Schumann on the grounds that B. was a snuffy, dirty old man with a beard : “ Doesn't the young fool know that at the time of Schumann's death Brahms was only twenty-three, and that when he fell in love with Clara he was a good-looking, well-set-up young German of twenty ? When I opened the door to him at Leschetitzky's one day in 1893 he was sixty, and then he did answer your friend's description ! ” Imparted the foregoing to the young fool in question, with the sting where it ought to be—in the postscript : “ But even if in 1856 Brahms had been a hundred and bent double is that any reason why Robert Taylor should not play the part ? Or isn't acting allowed for in *your* branch of *our* profession ? ”

*March 11* Leo still in good form and temper. Began to-day Monday. by asking whether one should correct mispronunciations in others. I said, “ Only when they are our social equals.” To which Leo at his most Johnsonian : “ To correct the lower orders is useless and therefore unkind. To instruct our own class is impertinent. To put right the people who hold themselves to be our social superiors is more than a duty : it is a pleasure.”

Bognor is going to be good for my vanity. Nobody recognises me here, and my name in the shops causes no stir. That the war should put one in one's place—*on avait compris ça*. But to be obliterated by Bognor ! It occurs to me that perhaps I am now, for the first time since I was a boy, leading the life which the ordinary man accepts as normal. Take yesterday. Got up, shaved, breakfasted in dressing-gown, read papers, strolled along promenade a cypher among cyphers, lunched, snored over a book while Leo snorted over another, tea, cinema, supper, bed. Fabulous creatures like George Robey, Sydney Carroll, George Whitelaw, Strube, Duggie Furber, and Guy Church are said to dwell in the neighbourhood, but

have seen no trace of them. George Mathew, whose paper has been moved here, comes down on Wednesdays and Thursdays only. Apart from him the dullness is absolute, like the power of Boris Godounov.

*March 12* The basis of Wilde's wit is the dressing-room of the *Tuesday*. chorus in any theatre. Produce far enough, in Euclid's sense, the wit of any gigolo, and you get Wilde. Produce that kind of wit to infinity and you do not begin to get Congreve, Fielding, Swift, Sheridan, Thackeray, Sydney Smith.

*March 13* About an American woman novelist who had *Wednesday*. been rude to her in print Lady Oxford is reported to have said, "I would put Miss B. in her place if she had a place." I have recently had to put Alfred Douglas in his place, which is a small if exquisite one. The occasion was his letter—the last in a long controversy on the standing of Oscar Wilde as a serious dramatist—containing the sentence: "It never occurs to you that I (as a first-rate poet and man of letters) am far more likely to be right about Wilde's poetry and prose than you are." A. D. also presented me with this :

Mr James Agate  
Crashed the pay-gate  
Of the Beaverbrook Press,  
And achieved great success,  
The time being ripe  
For his particular brand of tripe!

A. D. adds that he has sent this to the editor of the *D.E.*, "who won't print it." But I shall, and on Saturday morning next. Now for my letter :

*Villa Volpone*  
10 *Fairfax Road, N.W.6*  
9th March, 1940

DEAR ALFRED,

(1) Ye're a daarin' man, as Sean O'Casey says! But you know nothing at all about classification. To be a first-rate poet means that you are in the company of Shake-

speare, Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley, Browning, Blake. To be second-rate places you with Byron and Swinburne. At third-rate you join the Herricks, the Patmores, and the Housmans. Fourth-rate are the Rupert Brookes and the Wildes. I place you as poet in a class by yourself. You are in my opinion a third-and-a-half-rate poet—not so good as Housman, but better than Wilde.

(2) In the matter of dramatic critics here is the correct classification. First-rate—Hazlitt. Second-rate—G. H. Lewes. Third-rate—Shaw, Archer, Montague, Walkley. Fourth-rate—Max. Fifth-rate—Morgan, Brown, Cookman (*Times*). Sixth-rate—Dent (*Manchester Guardian*). I myself am a fifth-and-a-half-rate dramatic critic. Just a little better than Dent, to whom I am dictating this!

(3) But there is this difference between us. There is major poetry and there is minor poetry, and you are at the head of the minor-poet class. But there is only one dramatic criticism, and this is major, and my foot is on the lowest rung but one of this major criticism. As a dramatic critic I shall be forgotten. As a diarist I may or may not be remembered. But this I know, that I shall go down to history as The Man You Could Not Quarrel With. Treasure this letter therefore :

Herein lives wisdom, beauty and increase;  
Without this, folly, age and cold decay.

Your affectionate  
JAMES

But A. D. is incalculable in charm as well as in petulance. I looked for a vitriolic reply. Instead, there arrives this morning a copy of the very rare first edition of his sonnets with Crosland's Note, and on the fly-leaf he has written :

I have with great good-nature written this in pencil so that you can, if you like, rub it out when you have read. Read Crosland's Note at the end of this book, which appeared in 1908. My reputation as a major poet (and therefore at my best in the Shakespeare class) does not, of course, depend on Crosland's opinion, but as you are one of those people who have no fixed standards in literature, and merely say what you think is the right thing to say

and what you have heard from others, it will probably make you think.

A. D. March 1940

To which I immediately reply :

*Villa Volpone*  
10 Fairfax Road, N.W.6  
13th March, 1940

MY DEAR ALFRED,

But what a delightful gift, which I shall not only treasure, but re-read. (I know your poems better than you think.) You will be amused to hear that I whiled away a dull evening at the theatre by asking myself *why* I put Housman above you. And this is the answer. Your magnificence is easier to achieve than Housman's simplicity ! Any day of the week I can throw you off between London and Brighton a Shakespeare-sounding, Douglas-looking affair. While setting down the last sentence my mind was already at work on a sonnet to your address beginning

When that I peck at thy unruffled breast . . .

Whereas I just can't begin to think in a new strain, the strain that was new when Housman wrote

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now . . .

Milton's poetry flames in the forehead of the morning sky. Housman's twinkles in the Shropshire gloaming. Yours, my dear Alfred, glitters like Cartier's window at lunch-time. I feel that every expensive word of it was written in some boudoir within patent-leather distance of Bond Street.

Ever your  
JAMES

Whereupon A. D. puts his foot on the Agatian gnat with the single sentence : " Mon pauvre monsieur, are you not aware that seventeen of my best sonnets were written in Wormwood Scrubs ? " Enchanting !

*March 14* Spent the day writing my article for *John o' London's Weekly* on Zola's centenary next month.

Looking up Vizetelly's life am enormously interested to come across this :

He frequently feared that he might be unable to accomplish his daily task, finish the book he had begun, or conclude the speech he was delivering. At one period, before he could go to bed he had to satisfy a peculiar craving to touch and retouch certain articles of furniture, open and reopen certain drawers. Arithmomania pursued him: he was for ever counting the gas-lamps in one or another street, and the number of the houses. He long believed multiples of three to be of good augury. . . .

Also found a long passage about authors' mistakes:

Mérimée rewrote *Colomba* sixteen times before he sent it to the press; nevertheless several slips have been found in it. Flaubert devoted six years to *Madame Bovary*, and yet pictured one of its characters paying another exactly eighty-five francs in two-franc pieces.

This interests me in view of my recent discovery of a mistake in Fielding's *Jonathan Wild*. My edition is the World's Classics, published by the Oxford University Press. In Book III, Chapter VI, paragraph 1, occurs this passage:

The Booty he met with was not very considerable, and much less than that with which he acquainted *Wild*; for, of eleven Pounds in Money, two Silver-watches, and a Wedding-Ring, he produced no more than two Guineas and the Ring, which he protested with numberless Oaths was his whole Booty. However, when an Advertisement of the Robbery was published, with a Reward promised for the Ring and the Watches, *Fireblood* was obliged to confess the whole. . . .

Instead of "and much less" Fielding obviously intended to write "but much more."

In the Vizetelly I also found this:

It was at Flaubert's that Zola again met Edmond de Goncourt, who was still mourning his brother, and feeling so discouraged that he had hardly dared to take pen in hand. With Zola and Goncourt came Flaubert's young disciple, Guy de Maupassant, at that moment little more than one-and-twenty, then Ivan Tourgeneff and Alphonse

Daudet, these five being for a time the only intimates of the author of *Madame Bovary*.

This suggests one of my competitions. What *dîner intime* would one most like to have attended? This, or a dinner at Topham Beauclerk's with Johnson, Reynolds, Garrick, Goldsmith, and Boswell? Or should it be a spread at the Mermaid? Jock, peeping over my shoulder, wants "an evening at George Sand's villa at Nohant with Heine and Musset and the lady supplying the conversation, and Liszt playing the piano until the nightingales, intoxicated with music and moonlight, desisted for the rest of the evening!" J.A.: "Is that your own?" Jock: "No!" J.A.: "Whose is it?" Jock: "It's in a book which I read long before anybody had ever heard o' ye, Misterr James Agate!"

Afterwards I switch on to dinners in fiction. Here I cannot decide between one at which, at the Rocher de Cancale, Rastignac, Maxime de Trailles, Claude Vignon, Daniel d'Arthez, Nathan, Léon de Lora, and the *mystificateur* Bixiou hurl witticisms at one another, the swarry at which the green-grocer Harris is rebuked by Mr Tuckle for gaping, and *any* evening meal at Mr Charles Pooter's.

*March 15* The Ides of March with a difference. That Hitler's *Friday Blitzkrieg* has not come does not mean that the threat has gone.

Coincidence has a knack of being kind to me. The last thing I read in Vizetelly's *Zola* before going to Sean O'Casey's *The Star Turns Red* was this extract from the Preface to *Germinale*:

*Germinale* is a work of compassion, not a revolutionary work. In writing it my desire was to cry aloud to the happy ones of the world, to those who are the masters: "Take heed! Look underground, observe all those unhappy beings toiling and suffering there. Perhaps there is still time to avoid a great catastrophe. But hasten to act justly, for, otherwise, the peril is there: the earth will open, and the nations will be swallowed up in one of the most frightful convulsions known to the world's history."

I buy the printed version of the play, and on the dust-cover find this :

The voice of the workers proclaims that life must give an equal chance to all, that wasteful beggary must be replaced by fruitful labour, that leisure must be the lot of all, and that charity, great or small, must be strained away from the energies of man. The play says that if these things are not given they will be taken, for the Star will turn red and shine the wide world over.

I shall start off with this parallel on Sunday. Jock's notice was one of his very rare bad ones. He takes no interest in world- or any other kind of politics ; Lionel Hale tells me that he and the younger critics tried to make the play easier for Jock by telling him which were the Communists and which the Fascists. By some strange perversity O'Casey has called his anti-Red cleric the " Red Priest," and if there is any " magnificent meaning jumping out o' that " it eluded me, and must certainly have baffled Jock. Magnificent play and very fair acting by the amateur company at the Unity Theatre, a Communist organisation in Mornington Crescent. Went round afterwards to see Wilfred Rouse, who played the Red Priest very well indeed. Kicked up hell about the dirt back-stage, asking why, if Cleanliness used to be next to Godliness, pails and brushes should not be next to Universal Brotherhood. Got no answer.

*March 16* To-day's stylists ! How can a woman who limps *Saturday*. in one sentence go *prancing* down the street in the next ? " It was simply that they all stood waiting for the next of those hoarse, croaking breaths—and it did not come. And by then, of course, Mr Mortimer had already taken the final plunge and was at last careering headlong through the oceans of space." Why not through the deserts of time ? And why headlong ? Surely feet first !

*March 17* Bognor. In a film to-night that clever and beautifully dressed actress Ilka Chase, on being asked where her friend was, said, " She was coughing

worse than usual when she went out, so I expect she's gone to the theatre!"

In my impoverished state, for what historic object would I give five pounds? Reynolds's ear-trumpet? Johnson's snuff-box? Goldsmith's pen? Garrick's fob? Even in my present condition I should, for any one of these, again sell myself into money-lender's bondage up to fifty pounds. Yesterday was sent to me on approval, and priced at five pounds only, *Hogarth's walking-stick!* This is a beautiful piece, the handle decorated with masks of comedy and tragedy, leopards and peacocks, and the body encrusted with intertwined snakes. In the matter of warranty I am told that the owner has had the stick for twenty years, and that he bought it "at the sale of the late Dr Phoone, the archæologist and antiquarian, who built the house with the fascia of terra-cotta in the Renaissance style in Oakley Street, Chelsea. There was a label attached, but much worn, which unfortunately got lost, stating it was the stick of William Hogarth, artist." This seems to me to be good enough. A fake would be more meticulously authenticated, and higher priced. By the same post came an offer of a stick belonging to Venizelos. I have been able to turn this down, Greek patriots not being in my line.

*March 18* Jock's typewriter is "discovering," as Charles *Monday*. Morgan would say, a critical sense of its own. It recently appraised Greta Garbo's laughter as "morthless." To-day it discourses of "Sir Hugh Walople" being the "luterary" equivalent of something or other.

*March 19* Herbert Sidebotham died last night.

*Tuesday.* When I was a small boy in Manchester running errands for my mother I used to meet, and be scared of, an older boy with a dome of a head too big for his squat body, more books under his arm than anybody else could have tucked, and an extraordinarily self-important walk. Herbert Sidebotham's odd gait suggested two things, the nod of Lord Burleigh—for sapience marked the child—and the rhythmic bobbing of a horse's head. Throughout his life he was unable

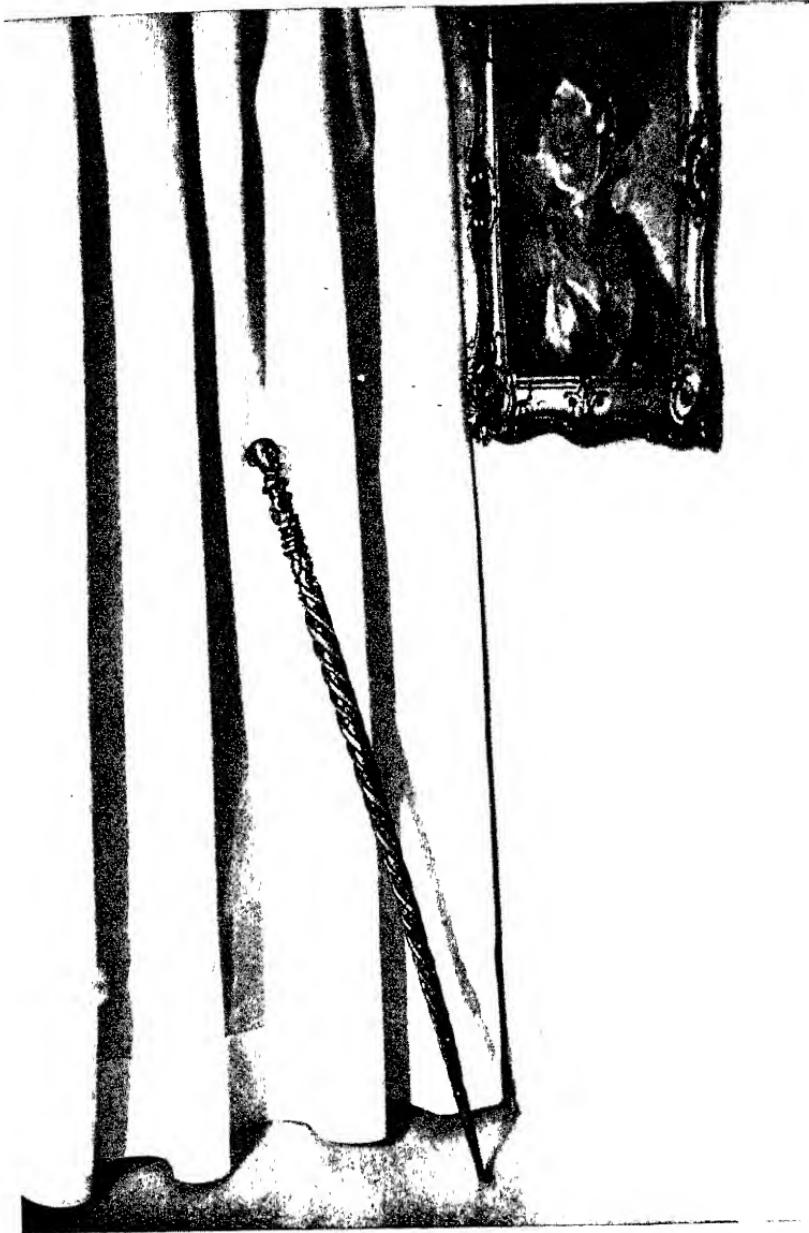


Photo Cross Brothers

*Hogarth's Walking-stick*



to cross a room without exhibiting this remarkable trait, which, though entirely unconscious, at once declared its owner to be a personage. It was, I think, the result of near-sightedness combined with a neck too short for craning. Balliol, of which he was a Scholar, put the finishing touches on what Nature had begun and the Manchester Grammar School had not impeded. Sidebotham acquired a manner, and you treated with him as with a sovereign. He exacted deference and returned charm; you might put it that he pontificated with a twinkle. There was, even in those early days, something overwhelming about the solemn young man, who took no more notice of the little boy on the other side of the street than he would have taken of a puppy-dog. And I used to say to myself, "Yes, but your people live in the Lower Seedley Road. Mine live in the Seedley Road." People reading this to-day can have no notion of the importance attached in the eighties to the petty niceties of social grading.

Twenty years passed, and Sidebotham was now night-editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, and—how shall I put it?—the most approachable peak in that aloof mountain range. C. P. Scott kept himself as inviolate as Buddha, Montague exhaled an atmosphere so rare that nobody else could breathe it, Monkhouse had always finished his theatre-notice and gone home. There remained after one o'clock in the morning only Sidebotham. First he would bid you wait while he polished off his leader, cogent and daylight-clear. I say polished off not up, for I never saw him re-read, and I know that he did not re-write; indeed, he once told me that though he might wait an hour for his first sentence, when he got that sentence down the rest of the article wrote itself. Then to the Press Club for a trifle of relaxation, and I can still see Sidebotham pacing the early morning streets, taking your arm and gravely nodding, and as unshakably wise about Gilbert and Sullivan as about German pretensions. Another twenty years and Sidebotham had won to the councils of the mighty. When I think of him it is as a man older than myself, still incredibly boyish, yet wiser-looking than an entire Cabinet. I see him like some figure in a novel by Disraeli, taking a Dear Prime

Minister or Dear Duke by the arm and down to dinner, nodding as he walks. But gravity was not the whole core of my old friend. An authority on the conduct of wars and empires, he could and did in his private capacity throw off these things. He had a great sense of fun. He loved the little excitements of life, and would not at any time have refused to buy the grandest possible piano because he could only afford the most babyish. He laughed at bank-managers, and his bond can never have been as good as his word.

In my first *Ego* I wrote: “ You do not really know Sidebotham until you have gone racing with him. I remember a trip to Ostend, where I found that my friend on the racecourse was another man. As he consulted his race-card the veins in that bland and noble forehead stood out like ropes. Feverishly with his field-glasses he swept all those parts of the course in which it was inconceivable that animals could be. As the horses went to the starting-gate he broke into heroic sweat, and as they thundered past the winning-post to win or lose his modest stake, he seemed very near collapse.” As I judge, “ Sider ” was happiest when he was gambling, playing the piano, which he did badly but with enormous gusto, or frolicking with his family. I remember being asked to spend a week-end at a “ cottage ” he had taken in the Isle of Wight. This turned out to be a noble pile built by the architect responsible for the Admiralty Arch. Coffee was served on the roof, and I counted nine lightning-conductors ! I remember thinking during dinner that night that Sider’s demeanour was exactly half-way between Sardanapalus and Traddles. The coffee finished, we repaired to the drawing-room, where, after a tempestuous rendering by our host of Chopin’s Fourth Ballade, the devoted family sat down to a prolonged game of rummy into which I was impressed.

When George Mair died Sidebotham wrote in the *Daily Graphic*: “ He had immense industry and forgot nothing ; an insatiable curiosity about whatever was new, whether it was scholarship, literature or affairs, and sufficient philosophy to be tidy and orderly in his mind.” I would apply the same tribute to Sidebotham, except that he forgot everything !

On the other hand, he was possessed of a philosophy so sufficing that it permitted him to be tidy and orderly nowhere but in his mind. He was an intensely lovable man, provided you got past that smoke-screen of awe. He would take a piece of toast as conquerors take kingdoms, and he was the only man I have ever known who could wear a crown and carpet-slippers together, and look right.

*March 20* Jock tells me he went early this morning to *Wednesday*. Southwark Cathedral to lay primroses on the grave of Philip Massinger, who died this day three hundred years ago. Almost nothing is known about Massinger, except that he left Oxford in 1606 and in 1614 joined with two other playwrights in asking the theatrical manager Henslowe for an advance of £5, being then "in unfortunate extremitie." The entry in the parish register of St Saviour's is "March 20th, 1639/40: buried Philip Massinger, a stranger." He wrote twenty-seven plays, of which eight were destroyed by Warburton's cook. As far as I am concerned he might have destroyed all of them with the exception of *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, unreadable, but probably highly actable. Jock is telling *Manchester Guardian* readers that the play still holds the stage, and "will always bob up whenever there is a great actor to bob up with it." I wonder. The last time the play bobbed up was in 1922, when Robert Atkins at the Old Vic had a shot at Sir Giles Overreach—a performance I unaccountably missed. The last occasion before that was at the St James's in 1877, with Hermann Vezin. First performed in 1633, the play was revived by Henderson, J. P. Kemble, Pope, G. F. Cooke, Edmund Kean, Vandenhoff, Charles Kean, Phelps, G. V. Brooke, and Edwin Booth. Macready never touched it, but Irving in America got as far as contemplating it. About Kean's performance Hazlitt has one of his acutest critical strokes: "When Sir Giles Overreach is asked, 'Is he not moved by the orphan's tears, the widow's curse?' he answers, 'Yes—as rocks by waves, or the moon by howling wolves.' Mr Kean, in speaking the latter sentence, dashes his voice

about with the greatest violence, and howls out his indignation and rage. Now we conceive this is wrong: for he has to express not violence, but firm, inflexible resistance to it—not motion, but rest. The very pause after the word 'yes' points out the cool, deliberate way in which it should be spoken." This suggests that the modern actor to fly at Overreach—whom Professor Minto described as "a sort of commercial Richard III"—might be Baliol Holloway, though I should prefer Charles Laughton modelling himself on Massinger's character plus Balzac's Old Grandet, whose stutter would help impiamente. Hazlitt's essay ends: "It would perhaps be as well if in the concluding scene Mr Kean would contrive not to frighten the ladies into hysterics." This lends colour to the statement that whenever the play was given by Kean, " maidens fainted and matrons were untimely delivered in the pit."

When Kean retired to his grandiose estate on the Isle of Bute one of his first concerns was to erect four busts over his gate-post—to himself, Shakespeare, Garrick, and Massinger. I cull this from Giles Playfair's admirable biography. Statue or no statue, it was Massinger's *The Duke of Milan* which brought Kean into the first of his violent collisions with the public. On the first night he failed to turn up. And next day sent to Alexander Rae this letter:

DEAR MR RAE,

I shall be quite unable to play in *The Duke of Milan* this evening. I met with a damned accident yesterday, being thrown out of a gig, and besides being stunned and bruised, have dislocated an arm. Hope soon to recover and with apologies to Public,

I am yours in pain,

EDMUND KEAN

N.B. Perhaps the great W.C.M. may be got.

That postscript should give the moralist pause. Were ever pretensions so demolished? And how well one understands that enmity caused on the one hand by fear of the growing cub, and on the other by jealousy of the old lion. Kean knew

that he was the greater actor, and Macready knew it too, and if he did not there were Leigh Hunt's writings to tell him. Straws show how great an actor is. "Tried to act Richelieu well, and did my best with a company and a Mr C—that would paralyse a Hercules," writes Macready. But who ever paralysed Kean? See his letter to Henry Lee, the manager of Kean's old Dorchester company: "If I go three weeks to Exeter I shall be *very happy to see* you—the book you have got, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, is as it is acted. I shall cut at rehearsal whatever is out in London—but they *must be perfect* or I can't get thro'—no matter how *bad* they are—but make them for God's sake perfect or I shall not play; if they ruin me on the first night I shall not play the second." No matter how bad they are! Macready flew into a rage if his company couldn't act; Kean if they could. "Iago. Acted well when Kean did not interfere with me," wrote Macready, in his diary for December 10th, 1832. Interfere with him! "You will be an actor one of these days," said Kean to young Samuel Phelps. "But mind, the next time you play with me for God's sake steer clear of my focus." Macready's mistake was to allow himself to be drawn into Kean's focus. His attitude to Kean throughout was the familiar one of the lesser artist coming it over the bigger one on the score of moral superiority. I do not suppose that W.C.M. could have found words to mark his disgust at the greater man, found by Elliston after his divorce case sitting up in bed in a hotel at Croydon entertained by a cigar, brandy, a cocotte of sorts, and an itinerant tumbler performing somersaults. Edmund Kean died of drink and genius; Macready of neither. Dame Madge Kendal, that embodiment of all the proprieties, speaking before Kean's statue in Drury Lane on the occasion of his centenary, made allusion to the genius alone.

NOTE. Is it possible that I am beginning to curb my divagational excesses? On the page in Macready's diary on which he describes Kean's funeral is an entry confirming "the superiority, as it seemed, of Malibran to-night over what appeared to me perfection in Schroeder-Devrient yesterday." Am resisting this.

March 21 Happened for the first time on Hugo's ridiculous Thursday. Happened for the first time on Hugo's ridiculous Thursday. lously named *Zim-Zizimi*, which sounds like a conjuring trick by the Great Dante. Found this tremendous passage on the tomb of Cleopatra :

Passants, quelqu'un veut-il voir Cléopâtre au lit?  
 Venez; l'alcôve est morne, une brume l'emplit;  
 Cléopâtre est couchée à jamais; cette femme  
 Fut l'éblouissement de l'Asie, et la flamme  
 Que tout le genre humain avait dans son regard;  
 Quand elle disparut, le monde fut hagard;  
 Ses dents étaient de perle et sa bouche était d'ambre;  
 Les rois mouraient d'amour en entrant dans sa chambre;  
 Pour elle Ephracœus soumit l'Atlas, Sapor  
 Vint d'Ozymandias saisir le cercle d'or,  
 Mamylos conquit Suse et Tentyris détruite  
 Et Palmyre, et pour elle Antoine prit la fuite;  
 Entre elle et l'univers qui s'offraient à la fois  
 Il hésita, lâchant le monde dans son choix.  
 Cléopâtre égalait les Junons éternelles;  
 Une chaîne sortait de ses vagues prunelles;  
 O tremblant cœur humain, si jamais tu vibras,  
 C'est dans l'étreinte altière et douce de ses bras;  
 Son nom seul enivrait; Strophus n'osait l'écrire;  
 La terre s'éclairait de son divin sourire,  
 A force de lumière et d'amour, effrayant;  
 Son corps semblait mêlé d'azur; en la voyant,  
 Vénus, le soir, rentrait jalouse sous la nue;  
 Cléopâtre embaumait l'Egypte; toute nue,  
 Elle brûlait les yeux ainsi que le soleil;  
 Les roses envoiaient l'ongle de son orteil;  
 O vivants, allez voir sa tombe souveraine;  
 Fièvre, elle était déesse et daignait être reine;  
 L'amour prenait pour arc sa lèvre aux coins moqueurs;  
 Sa beauté rendait fous les fronts, les sens, les coeurs,  
 Et plus que les lions rugissants était forte;  
 Mais bouchez-vous le nez si vous passez la porte.

All day I have been going about the house chanting :

Et plus que les lions rugissants était forte;  
 Mais bouchez-vous le nez si vous passez la porte.

March 23 I was sitting in the kitchen talking to Fred when Saturday. the door of a cupboard reaching to the floor began, very slowly, to open. That my 'fell of hair' did not rise was, due entirely to the absence of fell. After an immense time, some five minutes perhaps, the door opened

sufficiently to permit my tortoise, Whoopee, waking from winter sleep, to make her *rentrée* into polite society.

*March 24* Was it Walkley or Max who first described Henry Sunday. James as a patter from whom no perambulator

was safe? Hugh Walpole is a beamer, beneath whose glasses young writers' masterpieces grow like tomatoes. To judge from *Roman Fountain*, it appears that something is wrong with my old friend, which is like having something the matter with one's doctor. This is monstrous. How can the source of comfort be itself comfortless? Alas, nobody can do anything for Hugh, whose unhappiness is mystical. What is the meaning of life? Where have we come from, and where are we going to? (Hugh is neither a whence-ist nor a whither-ite.) What has happened to the fountain which we loved in our youth and can never find again? Perhaps in Hugh's case Charles Morgan ran off with it? Yet there have been compensations: "I went on one of these evenings alone to the cinema and saw the *Seven Dwarfs* again, and it was while I was there, during one of the intervals, that I saw Michael Angelo sitting quite close to me, the Michael Angelo of the statue by Antonio Novelli in the Michael Angelo House in Florence. There he was exactly, with the cropped hair, the bulbous broken nose, the fine, scornful mouth, the wonderful long tapering fingers, and the thick, strong legs. He was alone and apart in spirit as well as body. I would not have dared to speak to him. . . ." That is where we are different. If at *Pinocchio* I found myself sitting next to, say, Beethoven I should certainly speak to him, if only to find out whether the ghost of a man is as deaf as the man himself. Next I should prod him to see whether my finger went through him or not. And according as it did or didn't I should communicate with the Psychical Research Society. It presently appears, however, that the man is only an advertising agent who looks like Michael Angelo, and that Hugh is writing metaphorically. Is it, therefore, possible that the fountain is only a metaphysical one, like the mongoose in the railway-carriage story? "My mind floats in a kind of summer mist." Exactly! Hugh is a

*mistic.* For if he is the sort spelled with a 'y,' then Mr Pickwick, and the present writer, and Lear's Dong with a Luminous Nose are mystics. No, this part of the book won't wash. But the non-mystical part, all about the funeral of one Pope and the coronation of another, is a brilliant piece of reporting.

Another mystic who defeats me utterly is Dorothy Sayers. She writes in to-day's *S.T.* :

There are minds for whom the idea of personal survival is at best irrelevant and at worst horrifying. . . . What matters to them is not the prolongation of individual existence, but the eternal value of all things. Stupidity, however, being the slave of time, has no value for eternity, and will do its best, so far as it can, to cramp religion within a space-time continuum.

But how can things have an eternal value, or any value *for me*, unless I exist to apprehend that value? And if I am to be wiped out what do I care for values in the abstract? Let me put it another way. I cannot conceive that the eternal values are sufficient to themselves. What would be the use of being a superb walking-stick in a universe which contained nothing but the walking-stick? In other words the eternal values need Man. And Man going on for ever and ever, of which there is no guarantee. Now it must be obvious to anybody except the pure materialist that eternal things have more sense than to stake their existence on this planet not meeting with an accident. Therefore it cannot matter whether this planet meets with an accident or not. And since, by hypothesis, eternal values are not self-sufficient, it follows that whatever gives them their value, *i.e.*, Man, which so far as I am concerned means me, must continue to exist in some limbo independent of this precarious planet and the space-time continuum. My ideas of a future life are bound up with the notion of some such limbo, and I cannot separate them.

Now I am aware of possible objections to the foregoing. "I cannot conceive . . ." What have my powers of conception to do with the existence of things in fact? "What would be the use . . ." But that is to make walking-sticks think like me;

a walking-stick might be very happy in a universe which contained nothing but itself. Even its happiness might be irrelevant. "Eternal things have more sense . . ." Why need they have sense at all? Also I have not allowed for the possibility that Dorothy Sayers's "eternal value" may exist only in the consciousness of Man, and that when that consciousness goes out the eternal values depart also. In which case I am brought back to my Forlorn Achievement, of which I have written elsewhere in this diary. I realise that for amateurs to arrive at metaphysical conclusions is like making pronouncements about the differential calculus without ever having learned algebra. All I can do is to think as clearly as possible, and to realise that it is odds on every step I take in metaphysical logic being a false one. Can it be that Dorothy's "eternal value" has no connection with my "eternal values," that we are barking up different trees, and that there is a Cheshire cat in both of them?

March 26 Brother Edward sends me this:  
Tuesday.

"Moi, qui suis écrivain, quand je pense à quelqu'un,  
j'écris sans le vouloir avec son écriture."

*Siegfried et le Limousin*, par JEAN GIRAUDOUX

I have exactly the same experience, though it seldom lasts for more than a word, and stops the moment I notice what is happening. I cannot *consciously* imitate anybody's handwriting.

March 27 An odd letter, in which I have suppressed names  
Wednesday. and places :

DEAR MR AGATE,

Although you do not know me I know you by reading your criticisms of stage and film successes and failures. You may call me an omnivorous reader from the days of nursery rhymes and fairy-tales.

Now I am in the sere and yellow leaf.

Born on August 13th, 1863, married at twenty years to a man, son of a drunken Irish mother and a lunatic father

in Colney Hatch Asylum (unknown to me). He was Welsh, in the Royal Albert Hall Choir for thirty years, taught to drink by his wife, a dressmaker, whilst he was equally first-rate as a tailor. He was removed from his home for refusing to wear trousers and preferring to encase his lower limbs in a shawl—in a business house this would not do, and it was my stepfather who took him away from his wife and family and placed him where he belonged at Colney Hatch. He died there with but one visit from his son, my husband, who, becoming a drunkard like his parents, a gambler from early youth, and an immoral man, bigamously married a barmaid on St Patrick's Day, March 17th, 1920. Now dead and buried, following an operation for umbilical hernia. His bigamous mistress was in the same infirmary with an ulcerated leg from too much standing behind the bar at the hotel where she worked. She now owns everything of my husband's which rightly belongs to me. However, although in my seventy-seventh year, I am hale and hearty from wholesome work from the age of fourteen years.

Jock's comment on reading this was Lady Bracknell's "A life crowded with incident!"

*March 29* I don't mind the B.B.C.'s young men not knowing anything that happened yesterday. But why can't they ask? Why bleat about Ambrose Manning, who died this week in his eightieth year, that in *The Sign of the Cross* he played the Archangel Gabriel? This character does not appear in Wilson Barrett's masterpiece. The part played by Manning was that of Glabrio, an old Roman fribble.

*March 30* Went last night with Bergel to the Kilburn Saturday Empire and found a lot of good fun, no strip-tease, and no nonsense on the lines of Maupassant's *blanche* and rather sorry *nudité*. The best joke was one in which a comedian claimed to have invented a cure for which there is no disease. Walford Hyden and his orchestra in *Café Colette*. "Wonderful attack," I said to Bergel, who retorted, "Yes, but not much defence!" Afterwards to the

Bedford, where I was delighted to find G. H. Elliott, as tuneful and as nimble as when I first saw him thirty years ago. He had then a lean cheek which he no longer has, and a sunken eye which he now has not. But the spirit and the charm are there still. His old ditty about going back to Kentucky has not ceased to be an ode to pure happiness. The coon is young, the hot fit of life is on him, it is still "the hour of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower." It is as though pipes and tabors were sounding in Camden Town.

*April 1* One can always learn something—even at Bognor.  
*Monday.* I was sitting in a shelter on the front, marvelling at the dullness of my review books and the brilliance of the day, when a corporation employee cleaning the windows said, "It's going to rain. These windows don't make no sense!" He explained that when there is dampness in the air glass won't polish.

The names of Bognor's streets are in black letters on a white ground. At the corner of my road I saw dovetailed into the lettering the pencilled scribble: "B.M. loved T.B.H. here twice."

*April 2* Letter from Hugh Walpole:  
*Tuesday.*

*Brackenburn*  
*Manesty Park, Keswick*  
*March 29th, '40*

MY DEAR JIMMIE,

I liked your notice except—*why* should you always assume that what you call my 'mysticism' is insincere? It isn't. My religion is as real and genuine to me as my sense of Beethoven's Sonata 31, or my Turner water-colour, or your walking-sticks, or *Chartreuse de Parme*, or Jock's slow, sad smile. *Roman Fountain* is absolutely sincere from first to last—there is no pose in it of any kind.

I'm in town from Monday. What day after the 6th will you lunch with me?

Affectionately,  
HUGH

My reply :

*Villa Volpone*

10 Fairfax Road, N.W.6

2nd April, 1940

MY DEAR HUGH,

Is the Keswick air too strong for you? I did *not* say that your mysticism is not sincere. Of course it's sincere—and that's what's so funny about it!

Now do please try to come out of your summer mist and get the exact value of my next sentence. *You are a bad mystic in the sense in which Martin Tupper was a bad poet.* And heaven knows that nobody ever accused Tupper of being insincere! It is all very largely a question of physical make-up. You and I would both go admirably into Landseer's *Bolton Abbey in the Olden Time*. But nobody would believe us if some Puvis de Chavannes were to turn us into St Antonys in gouache!

And then, of course, there is no such thing as mysticism. In my first novel there occurs the sentence: "The inscrutable is merely evidence of lack of capacity in the scrutineers." Last night I saw the film of *Stanley and Livingstone*. Although in the seventies people knew nothing about Central Africa, they did not get mystical about it. I have no doubt that the centre of things is as little muzzy as the undiscovered heart of a continent. Mystics are people who attribute the wobble in their minds to wobble in the things they are mystical about. Rome, with its mumbo-jumbo, is the greatest offender, and what I most admire about your *Roman Fountain* is the precision with which you set down exactly what you saw at the Pope's funeral. The description of the lowering of the coffin is as 'sharp' as a drawing by Brangwyn.

What I didn't believe was the bit where you climbed to the top of St Peter's and wondered what would happen if you dropped a stone into the Tiber, or something of the sort. I just wasn't persuaded that you climbed—'clomb' is what you would mystically write—or that while climbing you had those thoughts. But if, dear Hugh, I am wrong, and you really did climb and felt that way about it, I still submit that you mustn't expect your public to believe you. "There's no art to find the mind's construction in the face," said King Duncan. Agreed! But people always

have construed and always will construe minds by faces. At a pinch one could conceive Aguecheek as a mystic—but never Sir Toby. And you and I, dear knight, are in the Sir Toby class!

I will lunch with you with the greatest possible pleasure on April 11th.

Ever your  
JAMES

April 3            Another exchange:  
Wednesday.

93 Inya Road  
University Estate  
Rangoon, Burma  
19th March, 1940

DEAR SIR,

Your employment of my Rachel 'howler' in your *Sunday Times* article of Jan. 21st had to be celebrated, so I ordered *Ego 2* and *Ego 3* to keep the first volume of your autobiography company on my shelves. They have reached me on the eve of sailing for Australia to fetch a convalescent wife, to whom they will give as much pleasure as myself. Here are two statements from our just concluded examinations which I trust may amuse you:

- (1) Mr W. H. was Shakespeare's junior; being unbridled in his passions, he eloped with Shakespeare's wife. This was a lesson to Shakespeare, and he never wrote sonnets again.
- (2) Marlowe was a homosexualist. He called Leander's belly beautiful. This is going too far.

Two weeks ago I read Montague's *Dramatic Values* through a long and wearisome train journey. Has any more of his dramatic criticism been published in book form? What splendid stuff he wrote! It is saddening to think that there may be more and equally good material buried in the files of the *Manchester Guardian*.

With sincere thanks for all the pleasure your books and articles have given me during the last twenty years in two hemispheres and three continents—it will be *four* by May,

Yours faithfully,

J. SELWYN TURNER

P.S. Montague's chapter on Ibsen sent me back to the

plays, many of which I bought in Texas years ago. My copy of *The Master Builder, etc.*, in Boni and Liveright's Modern Library, has a preface by Mencken (1917). It is a very witty and sane piece of writing in H.L.M.'s best manner. Do you know it? If not I shall be pleased to send you a copy of it.

10 Fairfax Road, N.W.6  
3rd April, 1940

DEAR MR TURNER,

Burma, Australia, the England of Shakespeare and Marlowe, classical Greece, matter-of-fact Manchester, Mencken's New York, and whatever Texas made of Ibsen—here is a crazy quilt of sheer delight!

I do indeed thank you for your letter, will welcome the Mencken, and regret that I cannot discover some more Montague for you. There is a little book called *The Manchester Stage*. This contains Montague's notice of Benson's Richard II, which appeared in the *M.G.* on December 4th, 1899, is probably his best piece of writing, and was lifted by me for my anthology entitled *The English Dramatic Critics*. If I can get a copy of either book, both of which are now rare, I shall have the greatest possible pleasure in sending them to you.

My friend Alan Dent ('Jock' of the *Ego* books), who is now the London dramatic critic of the *M.G.*, has been for some years plodding through the files of that paper since its beginning in 1820, and at the moment has arrived at the year 1896. He proposes one day to make a book out of his delvings, and up to now I have told him that he will have only one reader—which is me! I now propose to tell him that he will have two! May I put your name down for a copy? With luck it should appear about two years after this war.

Sincerely,  
JAMES AGATE

April 5 The wireless commentator spoke this afternoon of *Friday*. the thirty "boys" who do the horses in the Grand National as being the most deeply concerned in the race. This is the first time I have seen this obvious truth insisted on. I am quite a long way down in the list of *Ego*'s

owners! How difficult, by the way, is it to control one's thoughts! I have not worried about giving up the car and never think about motoring, though in the normal way I should have done some ten thousand miles since September. But whenever out of a railway-carriage window, or from the top of a Bognor bus, I see a field I at once fall to thinking about horses and to hankering after my old hobby. I ought to be worrying whether civilisation is going to survive. Instead I am continually asking myself whether I shall live to see another Olympia Horse Show. I should dearly like to know whether the yearling filly I bought at Henriques' sale has really grown into the miracle of two-year-old loveliness Albert writes about. But I am not going to sharpen regret by going to see for myself. Am not alone in this matter. To-day everybody has some nostalgia he keeps quiet about.

*April 7* Read Frank Smythe's *Edward Whymper*, which *Sunday* has a successful defence of climbing from first principles. Also a well-thought-out analysis of the reason why Whymper was not a great as well as an extraordinary man. The author finds this in the lack of spiritual attunement between Whymper's actions and his thoughts. I have always been strangely fond of accounts of mountaineering. Strangely, because I have never had the nerve to attempt the thing itself, and doubt if I should ever have had the necessary skill, strength, and endurance, or been able to overcome my fear of heights. As a boy I helped to recover the bodies of two young men killed on Great Gable, and what I saw then put an end to any notions about climbing. To this day I am not comfortable among mountains, though completely fascinated by them.

Fascination sticks out of this book everywhere. I am fascinated when I read that the minutes of the official inquiry at Zermatt were not available until 1920, nine years after Whymper's death and fifty-five years after the accident. I am fascinated when I read the entry in Whymper's diary made five days before his death on September 16th, 1911: "Sent word by the hotel porter to Fred Payot that I wanted

to see him, and he came at 8.30 P.M. We discussed the likelihood of those who were lost on Mont Blanc in 1870 appearing about this time at the end of the Glacier des Bossons, and gave him instructions what to do. He assented to go with me in search." I am fascinated too by the laconism of the end. Whymper made the foregoing entry on September 11th. On the 13th he writes, "Did not feel at all well towards the end of the day." After which he locks himself in his room, refuses to allow anyone to come near him or to see a doctor, and on the 16th quietly dies. Without, says Smythe, any premonition of the end.

I once met a nephew of Whymper's. It was at Boulogne, during the last war. We were both going on leave, but a gale in the Channel held up the boat service. I remember him as the most brilliant metaphysician I have ever argued with in a high wind. He told me that his uncle was only once injured in a climbing accident. This was when, mounting the steps of a lecture platform and possibly over-stimulated by the occasion, he fell and broke a leg !

*April 8 Nouveaux Contes Scabreux*, No. 10. Based on a Monday. conversation I had years ago at a suburban dinner-party. My neighbour, who appeared to be wearing Gertrude Jekyll's gardening boots and looked like one of the Old Ladies of Llangollen, said, "Tell me, Mr Agate. What is a sadist?" I said, "Imagine that somebody climbs a tower and from the top of it pours molten lead into the navel of an infant pegged out on the ground below. That would be an act of sadism, and the perpetrator would be a sadist." The old lady said, "He would have to be a good shot!"

*April 10* In the little play at the Gate Theatre called *The Wednesday Jersey Lily* Mrs Langtry is made to allude to an epoch in which the dressers of star-actresses were invariably their mothers : "You can't think what a bad dresser my ~~fnother~~ would make." The Prince of Wales, to whom this is said, answers, "Mine would be rather good."

Later the Prince, now King, says, "Lily, you are the only woman who never tried to get anything out of me." This is *le revers de la médaille*. Mrs Langtry once told me that King Edward was extraordinarily 'near,' never gave her a half-penny, or a present. Taking up a small gold snuff-box, she said, "This is the only thing I ever had from him, and I had to ask for it." Towards the end of her life, round about 1926, I frequently saw her at first nights, by which time, with her hair done up in sky-blue baby ribbons, she had become a ruin reminding one of Haddon Hall. In her early days she had that beatific expression characteristic of Victorian prettiness—like a sheep painted by Raphael; Mrs Kendal was the plain version of the same thing. The piece itself is a sentimental story. The egregious Captain Langtry, her husband, having committed suicide, the Lily is shown as cherishing a sincere passion for Prince Louis of Battenberg. There is a good scene in which the Prince of Wales endeavours to keep these lovers apart, not because he wants the Lily for himself, but because single they are a beautiful actress and a great sailor, and united they can only be two nobodies. The Lily then does what is expected of her and renounces her romance for ever, while remaining as faithful to it as is permitted by a royal friendship most delicately touched on, and by a second husband who is not touched on at all. In real life she was a poor actress, and knew it. Her passion was racing, where she was more successful, winning most of the important handicaps and the Ascot Gold Cup. I remember one night at the Theatre Royal, Manchester. Discovering her going through some papers on the hero's desk, the villain said, "What are you trying to find?" Looking up at the gallery, Mrs Langtry said, "The winner of the Liverpool Cup," in which her horse was running next day. Whereupon the Manchester gallery, which took itself seriously as a play-going entity, booed and hissed. One way and another she made a lot of money, and left close on fifty thousand pounds. Jock's printed comment on this fact seen in the light of this play is, "She was rich, but she was honest." In the front row were Esmé Percy and his mother. Esmé is fifty-two, and as I passed him I said, "You're much

too young to remember any of this." He said, "Mamma doesn't, so how can I?"

April 11 Jock and I lunched at 90 Piccadilly. No other *Thursday*. guests. Hugh at his pinkest and most cherubic.

He and I jabbered incessantly; Jock, with more sense, devoted himself to the food and drink, with an occasional "That's right" and sometimes "That's wrong." Afterwards we dropped our cigar-ash into a wooden bowl painted by Gauguin, and admired Hugh's latest acquisition—the scarab ring which Wilde never stopped twirling throughout the trial. He has bought, by the way, the smaller of Monty's two Matisses. I told him that, out of excess of delicacy, when going through the final proofs of *Ego 3*, I suppressed my parody of his Lakeland style. He was indignant at my thinking he might be hurt, and made me promise to insert the pastiche in my entry for to-day. Here it is:

'Twas early morn. The dew was still on the grass, and the grass was still underneath the dew. Presently the sun would get hotter and there would be no more dew. But the grass would remain. When the dew had gone the grass would be dry, and Susan Saddleback would be able to sit down. She decided to wait. Below her was the lake of Derwentwater. Behind her were the fells, to the right the jaws of Borrowdale, to the left the pikes of Langdale. Above her, both right and left, was the sky. At her feet were lark-spurs, raising their heads to salute first the songsters and songstresses of the waking day, and second the spurs of the lakeland hills which held her as rapt as they had done a week come Tuesday. Susan was nothing if not self-analytical. Why, she asked herself, whenever she glimpsed Great Gable did she always think of Clark?

April 12 Mrs Patrick Campbell is dead. Of her *Paula Friday*. Tanqueray that unimpressionable critic William

Archer wrote after that first night of May 27th, 1893: "Never was there a more uncompromisingly artistic piece of acting. It was incarnate reality, the haggard truth." Neither Shaw nor Max was gammoned by the play itself.

Yet both used the then-significant word 'glamour' in connection with the unknown young woman chosen to play Paula. There followed a round of great parts in which the changes were rung on Pinero, Ibsen, and Sudermann—she was the best by a hundred miles of all the Magdas I have seen. Her Juliet and Ophelia had been but so-so, but now in 1898 came her ever-memorable Mélisande to the Pelléas of Sarah Bernhardt. I remember one afternoon soon after the turn of the century when I stole from my office-stool to see Mrs Campbell. The play was Echegaray's *Mariana*, and all I recollect of it now is a long scene in which Mrs P. sat quite still and told of an incident in Mariana's childhood. She was being snatched up out of her cot, and her mother's lover was crying, "Be quick! be quick!" She was lovely in those days, and filled the mind with a haunting sense of baffled importunacy, and sympathy for all creatures engaged in strange and romantic quests. Her voice was like Casals' 'cello, and her silences had the emotional significance of Maeterlinck's shadowy speech. This was an actress who, for twenty years, had the world at her feet. She kicked it away, and the ball rolled out of her reach.

"I am not like the things I do," says a character in Allan Monkhouse's *Mary Broome*. I attribute this great player's failure to stay the course to the fact that she came to resemble the things she said. To them she sacrificed her material, her art, and, finally, herself. Gloriously witty things which burned her mouth as money burns my pocket. Despicably cruel things, as when, at a party, she went up to a clever child standing beside a distinguished actress well on in her sixties and said, "My dear, how young you look, next to everybody!" It is a rule of golf that nothing a player can do can deprive him of the half he has already gained. Twenty sorry years could not cancel out the earlier and glorious twenty. One can only say that our young people can never have known this artist at anything like her best. In my life I have seen six great actresses, and six only. These are Bernhardt, Réjane, Mrs Kendal, Ellen Terry, Duse, and Mrs Patrick Campbell.

April 14 Roosevelt said yesterday, "If civilisation is to *Sunday*, survive, the rights of the smaller nations to independence, to their territorial integrity, and to an unimpeded opportunity for self-government must be respected by their more powerful neighbours." Then why doesn't America do something about it? Talk like this is as offensive as criticism of the play of a bridge-hand by an onlooker. Worse! For this is an onlooker who is morally bound to cut in and doesn't.

April 15 The naval victory at Narvik is not the province of *Monday*. this diary. Permitted, perhaps, to note that the incident of the crew of the *Hardy*, arming itself to the teeth, taking to the land, and not being heard of since, is pure eighteenth century. One thinks of all this in terms of longboats and cutlasses.

April 16 Holy Trinity, Sloane Street. Memorial service for *Tuesday*. Mrs Pat. Few people there except *les fidèles*, meaning Ernest Thesiger and his circle, including Esmé Percy. No managers, no critics, no leading actors or fashionable actresses except Violet Vanbrugh, Cathleen Nesbitt, and John Gielgud. John, who read the Lesson, has this in to-day's *Times*:

A curiously complex sense of humour seemed to disturb her concentration, and to tempt her in later life to a perverse desire to clown in a serious part and to wish to find tragic opportunities in a comic one.

With this in mind one found a terrible propriety in the words of the hymn chosen for this service :

There no more the powers of hell  
Can prevail to mar their peace.

Stella's peace was marred by the devil within her: her great spirit made it a drawn battle.

After the ceremony stayed for a little in the bright sunshine talking about John's Lear with Esmé Percy, and telling him that this seemed to me to be an immensely clever

assumption by an ash-tree of a part that belongs to the oak. John, with his tenor voice, is a *light* tragedian. Hamlet and Richard II, yes. Lear and Richard III, no. I imagine that he would be the ideal King John, and not so much o'er-parted as out-parted by Othello. What I want for Lear is the stage's equivalent of Harry Baur on the films. Quite the best performance was Jack Hawkins's superb Edmund, though the part is comparatively easy; he struck the note of emotional buccaneering and of Edmund revelling in it. Stephen Haggard's Fool, played along the lines of Courtenay Thorpe's Marchbanks in *Candida*, appears to have displeased everybody except Jock and me. Peter Page telephoned before I got up this morning to say the Fool hadn't been funny. To which I felt like retorting that he should have gone to *The Yeomen of the Guard*. Cathleen Nesbitt's Goneril and Fay Compton's Regan might have come out of Noel Coward's *Fallen Angels*. I say nothing about dressing early female Britons in the fashions in which the modish ladies of to-day dine out. But why are these highbrow producers unaware of the first rule of production—that the players should make themselves heard and be allowed to be seen? There was a stop-watch interval between the sound of Cordelia's voice and the sense of the words she was supposed to be enunciating. I could not see her in the "Nothing, my lord" speech because Burgundy was in the way, and nothing of Lear in his "toasted cheese" speech, because Gloucester masked him. The Old Vic was crammed, and everybody from Eddie Marsh to Hugh Walpole—or from Hugh to Eddie—was there. On the whole, I am inclined to echo Esmé Percy's verdict: "Tremendously exciting *before the curtain went up!*!"

April 19 To the Redfern Gallery to see Monty's pictures. Friday. Rex Nankivell has arranged them beautifully, and they make a brilliant if, to me, distressing show. Bought the little Goerg—*Jugement de Paris*. This shows the drabs of some small-town Maison Tellier parading scraggy shoulder-blades and skinny *derrières* before a nervous *client* and under the Awful Eye of the *patronne*. The essence of

Conte Scabreux. Magnificent catalogue with good introduction by St John Hutchinson :

There in Paris, where art did not seem an idiosyncrasy or a pose, where the workman looked into the picture shops and at modern pictures without splitting his sides with laughter, where the upper classes never looked at them at all, but where the middle classes bought them because they liked them, and where at that time the big dealers' boom had not begun, one could see the artists of our renaissance flourishing like flowers in a flower-bed. . . . This preface does not set out to be an art criticism, it is really a talk between two friends about pictures ; it is the talk I have had so often with Shearman, at the club, at a café, at Lord's, during a walk in Paris or a motor tour on the Continent.

*April 20* Looked up Hutchy and found him having a day *Saturday*. in bed and dining sybaritically off grapefruit and asparagus. Palely loitering by his bedside was Mary Hutchinson ; her Keatsian pallor is as decorative as it is alarming. Looking as though she might pass away at any minute, Mary is, I firmly believe, stronger than most horses. Even indoors and taken unawares she is always wittily dressed, while at parties her air of an unsurprised virgin staring out of some saucy religious canvas distinguishes her from the ruck of merely pretty women.

Hutchy, who with Tim Dawes is Monty's executor, gave me Monty's diary for the last eight years to read, saying that there was nothing in it he would not want me to see. I read it through last night in the hope of finding something with which to tie up the odds and ends of a portrait scattered through the *Ego* books. Nine-tenths of the diary would interest only Monty's friends. But there are charming things in it which help to explain the fascination he had for all of us. His humility, for example. On a lonely cruise in the Baltic he writes :

Am thrown on my own resources for a fortnight. This must be a relief to my friends, with whom I have recently shown a tendency to be quarrelsome (when bilious). I fear

that T. does not like to be told that he is lethargic and that he can't pronounce French, and I know J.A. hates to be told that his work is not indispensable to the *Sunday Times* and is not creative! Must stop this. After all, who am I to criticise anybody?

On a voyage to Spain :

Have been thrashing out the question of backwaters and stagnancy. Have concluded that this is the penalty one pays for a lazy and secluded life in the Civil Service, and that it doesn't matter. There are moments, however, when the comparative notoriety of erstwhile inferiors is a little galling.

And :

H. has been made a K.C. Je souffre, mais sans rancune.

Then there is his inverted snobbery :

Refused (a) to sup with James to meet Princess M. L., (b) to attend the Royal Academy French pictures *soirée* (the Prime Minister, etc.), and (c) to dine with Lady M. So there!

At the same time he knows his due and can write :

Went to Scarborough with James. The Pavilion Hotel could only take us in one night. So we had to do squaliders. Nice rooms facing sea, but food and general atmosphere rather boarding-house. James's cup of tea rather than mine.

His observing eye :

Oslo. In front of the theatre there is a ridiculous statue of Ibsen in a granite frock-coat with bulging whiskers like rubber sponges.

And :

Have finished moving. Nothing left in the house except the telephone squatting on the floor like a toad.

His ear for the good thing :

Lady D. gave a luncheon party rather too grand for my comfort. The Austen Chamberlains, the Willingdons, the

Rodds, and Maurice Ingram. Sir A. told how Balfour, forced against his will to meet G.B.S. at a party, listened in complete silence to a collection of epigrams and paradoxes greeted with much applause by the rest. Then suddenly, when G.B.S., running away with his tongue, said something rather obviously foolish and strained, A.J.B. took his chance and said sweetly, "Would you kindly repeat your last remark, Mr Shaw? I did not quite understand it." Shaw is alleged to have collapsed, pricked at last. But I doubt it.

His honesty of opinion :

James's new *Ego* is out. Very vulgar. What a contrast to Chesterton's delightful autobiography !

Then there is his long fight against ill-health. Monty was more than six feet tall, and weighed over sixteen stone without his clothes. But he was never really strong, and his diary is full of his desperate struggles, unsuspected by any of us, against cracks in the fabric. He was a hypochondriac with real illnesses to battle against, and these records show how he was supported by his philosophy and his courage. And there was another fight too. He was naturally selfish, knew it, and combated it. A spoilt child, he had immense consideration for other people :

Good crossing, but spent a horribly sleepless night in a cabin like a coffin with ferocious icy draughts if one opened anything. Did noblers and gave H. the best cabin, as he stated that being a sick man the other would make him ill. (Mem. Must guard against this ruse.)

His capacity for affection. About Alan Parsons :

How one will miss that hearty dislike of highbrows, pomposity, and snobbery. That unconventional brusqueness reflecting a shy and sensitive personality responsive to any mood. Affectionate and loyal if he liked you, but with a mordant, witty tongue with which he gave vent to his dislikes and did not spare his friends. I can never remember *not* liking to see him at the club or theatre or a party. He never was in the way. He accepted his friends entirely, and even swallowed me, though widely different in temperament

and habit. I feel as if a window had been shut somewhere which can never open again.

His fondness for making delicate fun of his friends :

This evening H. explained that T. S. Eliot's poems mean that James Joyce is not a humbug and that it is permissible to end a line with 'and,' and that seventeenth-century poems were obscure, and what about Matisse !

Here is H., who of course is Hutchy, in Spain with Monty. Incidentally, the description of the country is charming :

Barcelona. This has been a terrific day in the car. First we went to Lerida, the longer, flatter road to begin with in deference to my nerves about hairpin mountain bends. Then in spite of warnings and fears, but in deference to H.'s firm peevishness, to Lerida over an incredible, lonely, gaunt road over wild country. In spite of bad surface arrived creditably early, and lunched hungrily high up in a small inn looking over the river. Lerida is rather obviously placed on a hill on a river, and the hill holds the ancient cathedral, now a barracks, which H. insisted on seeing. So we clambered over rocks in piping heat, I doing silent noblers except for an occasional muttering. Then at last on to the road back to Barcelona and civilisation. Unluckily on the top of a high, peaked hill to which we had climbed in dangerous serpentine turns, when looking forward to one's hotel and a drink, H. saw that a road went off to Montserrat. Protests being unavailing against threatened sulks, we had to proceed incredibly dangerously on hairpin bends over sheer thousand-feet drops to a monastery quite invisible on arrival. All in risky dusk light, with heart in boots, tongue at roof of mouth, and sinking stomach feeling. Home eventually, thank God, in black darkness. Rather trying to nerves, but the views were awfully magnificent. Pyrenees, ballarcas, precipices. Am glad we went in spite of dying many little deaths. A fine hot day. Cherry-trees in blossom. Lovely clear air. A wonderful evening light. The little golden-brown towers crowning their hills !

The diary has scores of references to me—nearly all uncomplimentary. I bark boorishly, cannot control my manners, do

bilkers on half a dozen occasions, am very tiresome abroad. I get Monty to motor me to a horse-show: "But of course James must make me get up an hour earlier to see him eat his breakfast an hour later." On the other hand, the entry for August 16th, 1936, reads:

Returned from Belfast via Larne and Stranraer. Wet, misty drizzle on crossing, and as our train missed a connection we were  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours late at Euston. This is too much on a long journey, and one curses the L.M.S. for its hideous inefficiency in spite of exacting huge prices for tickets. J.A. fractious in train, but on the whole he was very good.

To Monty I owe my happiest hours in London during twenty years. I shall end with his last letter to me, written after a dense fog and complete breakdown of communications had prevented me from turning up at his Christmas dinner-party:

12 Hyde Park Gate, S.W.7  
Boxing Day

DEAR JIMMIE,

Here is Jock's Quiz for Xmas, which much amused us. Please guess it yourself. We did pretty well.

I am sorry you could not come, but le brouillard de Londres est dévastateur. Quand même, 'l'ami le plus fidèle'! Mais je n'ai jamais de rancune.

M.

April 21 Letter to Desmond MacCarthy:  
Sunday.

10 Fairfax Road, N.W.6  
April 21st, 1940

DEAR DESMOND,

I do not understand you when you say in to-day's *New Statesman*, "In the interpretation of poetic drama the resources at the actor's disposal fall to my mind in this order of importance: (1) Voice (2) Gesture (3) Dress." Haven't you forgotten Facial Expression? Read again the Vashti chapter in *Villette*. "What I saw was the shadow of a royal Vashti." "In each of her eyes sat a devil." "These evil forces wrote hell on her straight, haughty brow. . . They writhed her face to a demoniac mask." "Vashti

was not good I was told; and I have said she did not *look* good." Add the parallel with Peter Paul Rubens, and I submit that Charlotte's impression was visual rather than aural. In these two tremendous pages I find only one allusion to Vashti's voice, one to her gestures, and one to her dress.

The finest voices you and I have heard on the English stage were Ainley's and Forbes-Robertson's. Yet what caused Harry to fail as Macbeth? His looks. I find that I wrote in our paper: "An auburn wig gave him the air of a Wagnerian tenor *un peu bête*," and "This actor suffers in this part from his many perfections, including nobility of voice and *serenity of countenance*." (Italics fresh.) His face throughout looked as though it had been cold-creamed in a beauty-parlour, so expressionless was it. Why was Forby, in spite of a voice like a cathedral organ, a lesser actor than Irving, who, in G.B.S.'s words, "had no voice, and, when you looked closely at him, no face"? I contend that it was because of the super-use the old man made of that "almost no face."

You remember, of course, how Maurice Baring felt about Sarah's recital of La Fontaine's *Les Deux Pigeons*—"that for the perfect utterance of beautiful words this was the Pillars of Hercules of mortal achievement." But suppose she had looked like a muffin? I remember Maurice writing of Mrs Pat's Juliet—a failure, by the way—that in the balcony scene she gave the words "their natural fragrance like night-flowering stocks in the twilight." And here is another bit about Mrs Pat that I am going to copy out for you:

"It was not only that she was poetical, but she held the secret of glamour, and spoke with the accents and looked at us with the glance that belongs to that mysterious world where Christabel remembers, and Sister Helen burns her waxen man, and fire-spirits shine in the Beryl, and the Knight-at-Arms loiters on the cold hillside, and where the cups of wine turn pale, and the hound falls dead at the sight of a woman with the West in her eyes."

You will have noted that Maurice gives equal credit to accents and looks. Turning back to Vashti's death-scene, I find that Charlotte writes, "When the vision of all eyes centred in one point, when all ears listened towards one quarter . . ." Again an equal division between eyes and

ears. Which looks as though you couldn't separate them, though on the whole I think the eyes have it.

I shouldn't be bothering you with all this if it were not that, while I don't mind disagreeing with Ivor or Cookman or Jock, I am uncomfortable when I find myself at loggerheads with you. You are too old and too knowledgeable a bird to be differed from lightly.

Yours ever,

JAMES AGATE

*April 22* Hot. The thorn in my neighbour's garden has *Monday*. burst into flower, and floods my wall as Mélisande's tresses flooded Pelléas. Am lyrical this morning because of a great experience last night—the discovery at the Gallery First-Nighters' dinner of a young man with a voice of Gigli-like quality. Name—Charles Gillespie. Age—in the thirties. Career—buried in the provinces in third-rate musical-comedy companies. Has abandoned this, and been studying seriously for a year. Good address and figure and pleasant-looking features. Charlie Cochran, who was also at the dinner, agreed that he ought to go at once to Sadler's Wells. Having satisfied myself that the young man is serious, I began to get busy, and at ten o'clock this morning rang up Joe Batten, at H.M.V. Joe very sympathetic, and what is more, helpful. I am to take Gillespie to the studios in Abbey Road to-morrow morning.

*April 23* Gillespie declines to be publicly recorded. This *Tuesday*. is right if, as he thinks, his middle notes want a little more ironing out. Joe Batten very much impressed by G.'s singing of arias by Meyerbeer and Puccini. An impression was made of these and at once played back, which action automatically destroys the soft wax.

*April 24* Lunched with Willie King at the St James's *Wednesday*. Club and told him Campbell Dixon's *mot* about the film *Gone with the Wind*—“an epic about a nonentity.” Willie said, “So is the *Iliad*.”

April 26 Here is one of the first poems thrown up by the war Friday. The author is 904022 Cpl. O'Donnell, P. A. T., of the R.A.F., and the poem is sent me by his mother :

#### NIGHT SENTRYIES

The crisp moon burns  
The night through,  
With brittle lacings  
Fresh upon the cold,  
And still, still  
The light laves,  
Though Night grows old.

The white hours come,  
Are measured  
By the mind's footsteps,  
By the trailing leaf  
And fleet forms  
In velvet  
That never come.

This music is  
For sleepers,  
Who, slipping anchor,  
Ride upon its waves.  
Against night,  
Fast waking,  
Stand we; stand the slaves.

24.12.39

April 27 Gillespie a furore at the Savage Club to-night. Saturday. "O Paradiso" from Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine*. Benno, Parry Jones, and Gerald Moore all very flattering. Even the staff sensed the body and bouquet of a voice poured out as though somebody had stove in a cask of Chambertin.

April 28 Have just come upon tremendous proof of the up-Sunday. to-dateness of Dickens. Here is Harold Skimpole on the rationing of meat :

" Some men want legs of beef and mutton for breakfast ; I don't. Give me my peach, my cup of coffee, and my claret ; I am content. I don't want them for themselves, but they

remind me of the sun. There's nothing solar about legs of beef and mutton. Mere animal satisfaction ! ”

On income tax :

“ Suppose I say to a man, how much ? Suppose the man says to me seven and sixpence ? I know nothing about seven and sixpence. It is impossible for me to pursue the subject, with any consideration for the man. I don't go about asking busy people what seven and sixpence is in Moorish—which I don't understand. Why should I go about asking them what seven and sixpence is in Money—which I don't understand ? ”

On privation in war-time :

“ Yes,” said Mr Skimpole, turning his bright face about, “ this is the bird's cage. This is where the bird lives and sings. They pluck his feathers now and then, and clip his wings ; but he sings, he sings ! ”

*April 29* Jock greatly excited about his eighth godson, *Monday*, which arrived on Saturday. The father, whose name is Nelson, is head office-boy at the *Manchester Guardian*. The infant is to be called Alan Horatio Nelson.

*April 30* A snag has arisen in connection with the naming *Tuesday*. of Jock's godson. This is that his mother declines to have her son associated with Horatio Bottomley ! Jock, bringing up his heavy guns, has intimated that there was a still more famous admiral, and that if the name he wants is adhered to I will immortalise the infant in *Ego 4*. In the meantime I understand that James Bone will be asked to arbitrate in the matter.

On the subject of immortality an unknown friend writes to me from Pau to say that nobody recognised Mrs Patrick Campbell in the Mrs Cornwallis-West who was buried there recently : “ You may remember Lord Dunsany's story of Fame saying to the Poet, 'Meet me in the little grave at the back of the workhouse in a hundred years.' He might do another about Fame and the Notable Writer of to-day :

‘Meet me in a hundred years in the little footnote on Page 496 of Dryasdust’s *Forgotten Georgians*.’”

*May 1* Good Anglo-French Concert for the troops at *Wednesday*. Drury Lane yesterday. Gracie Fields, looking a little etherealised after her recent illness, brought the house down with a parody of any prima donna in “Una Voce.” This was inserted into the middle of a song about a Co-op. shop. Maurice Chevalier put over some French army types which went down very well. Most amusing of all was Cyril Ritchard in a burlesque of a female torch-singer crammed to the back teeth with sex-appeal and looking like all the King Lears in all the fifth acts I have seen. An incredibly lewd and witty performance. One expected at any moment to hear, “Pray you, undo this button.”

Coming away, Jock told me that in Dublin he heard an old Irishwoman say, “He t’rew a kittle of boilin’ wather at me, and he lying in his bed supposed to be on the sick list !”

Have just read this admirable thing about the Jews by Desmond MacCarthy :

In the summer of 1913 Lady Ottoline Morrell asked me and a few others to meet Mr Asquith. The talk turned towards national characteristics and then the Jews. I said that I thought the great difference between the Jewish and the Gentile temperament was that the Jew could not love things *platronically*—he *must* also possess them; and pink with pleasure at the thought that I might be exhibiting intelligence before a man for whose character and intellect I had great respect, I developed this idea. When a Jew loves pictures, though poor, he will somehow manage to possess some; when he loves music or the theatre, and is wealthy, he will float concerts and plays. We Gentiles certainly love money, but most of us *platronically*—we play with the idea of becoming rich; while a Jew who loves money is determined to possess it. If he loves splendour he will surround himself with so much that the Gentile feels stifled; if he loves hospitality his own may be so lavish that we may murmur, “Perhaps this is too much.” In regard to things that are best admired and pursued with a certain indifference, his desire to have and to hold often introduces

a disagreeable element into his preferences and tastes. His possessiveness is apt to invade, too, his relations with others. It adds, it is true, an emotional warmth and, as it were, 'body' to loyalties and affections, but it also has grave drawbacks.

Jock, who showed me this, says it clearly proves that I myself am no Gentile ! More seriously, it confirms a passage in a book by Henry Maxwell which I copied out and have kept by me :

The Jews are an exceptionally virile people ; they possess in the individual all the normal elements which go to make a human being, but each one, as it were, is *working overtime* ! They are one and all a little more than alive ! Consequently they reflect the normal aspects of humanity through a magnifying-glass, and their feelings and reactions —their joys, sorrows, passions, will-to-live, ambitions, virtues, and vices—all appear somewhat to *obtrude*, and thereby to attract censure.

*May 2*      James Bone having arbitrated to the effect that *Thursday*. Jock's new godson should be called Alan *Hardy Nelson*, a further snag arises. Another possible godfather is Alan Thomas, the editor of *The Listener*, and as Thomas Hardy is Jock's god and was born a hundred years ago next month, the name now suggested is Alan Thomas Hardy Nelson ! Jock asking me for my opinion in this strait, I said, " Call the kid Joe ! "

*May 3*      Lunched with George Harrap, who announced that *Friday*. at eleven o'clock this morning he had secured enough paper to print 2000 copies of *Ego 4*. It occurs to me here that this may be the last of this diary to be published for some time. Jock dourly observing that after the war there is the possibility that world-reconstruction may come between the public attention and ME, have been rummaging through my old newspaper-cuttings books, from which I rescue three items which may otherwise very easily be lost. Here they are :

(1) Letter by Aubrey Beardsley, dated April 27, 1894 :

*To the Editor of the "Pall Mall Gazette"*

SIR,

So much exception has been taken, both by the Press and by private persons, to my title-page of the *Yellow Book*, that I must plead for space in your invaluable paper to enlighten those who profess to find my picture unintelligible. It represents a lady playing a piano in the middle of a field. "Unpardonable affectation!" cry the critics. But let us listen to Bomvet :

"Christoph Willibald Ritter von Gluck, in order to warm his imagination and to transport himself to Aulis or Sparta, was accustomed to place himself in the middle of a field. In this situation, with his piano before him and a bottle of champagne on each side, he wrote in the open air his two *Iphigenias*, his *Orpheus*, and some other works."

I tremble to think of what the critics would say had I introduced those bottles of champagne! And yet we do not call Gluck a *décadent*.

Yours obediently,  
AUBREY BEARDSLEY

*The Bodley Head*  
Vigo St., W.

(2) Then a parody of A. B. Walkley by Gerald Du Maurier, written about 1920 :

ONE EVENING

By VINEGA MAY

|                |   |   |                        |
|----------------|---|---|------------------------|
| Lord Croghurst | . | . | MR G. HIGGS            |
| A Doctor       | . | . | MR WALKER              |
| Meadows        | . | . | MR KEMBLE KEAN         |
| Lady Croghurst | . | . | MISS DOROTHY LIGHTNING |
| A Maid         | . | . | MISS PLINY             |

The elder Balzampleu once said that grief was like a *bognon trinbussé* (one cannot translate it), a tumbledown iortex, to borrow nobody's phrase, a slag-heap of the muscle's imaginings, an uninspired profile, a *bocôdo decadenti*. Sometimes, perhaps, Miss (or is it Mrs?) May would have it otherwise. Let us 'tûrquer' her well-oiled theory of what she endeavours to get through to us, and rightly or wrongly declinate. *Che volta per sè multinaplati garto.*

Surely not! The old Gordian was a truculent fellow, but somehow one loved him, and would have welcomed a ride with him through those bridal paths unseen, and even ventured to taste the 'amber vintage.' One could not help wondering with Lady Croghurst, who appeared sometimes to be wondering also, if the Doctor 'knew his job,' and what his fee would be. His portentous bag was so dative and absolute. All through the thirteen acts that bag, that *vasta basketina*, seemed to focus the attention and *birker* one's vulgar curiosity. Was it for evil, or was it for good? What was that monstrous bag for? One gave it up, as they say, and mentally retired to the silent room in uffish thought. One, or perhaps two of us, noticed with a pleasurable thrill that the part of the maid was entrusted to a Miss Pliny. Was one, or were two of us, right in supposing that

Alliques non postus  
 Lique sed sodium bestum  
 Pro allus concernedus?

(3) And last, Montague's note on the death of Réjane in 1920 :

Paris buried Réjane on Saturday with the infinite regret due to any artist who can do any thing, however limited, uniquely well, so that the artist's death is a diminution, for the time being, of the world's power of seeing itself. Réjane's acting showed us the most primitive and physical of emotions worked up to their last subtleties of acquired finesse. Her genius was sex bejewelled with every invention of cunning and charm that in civilised history—perhaps long before—the instinct has forged for its armoury, so that you felt she was the last, up to date, of the line of Helen and Sappho and Queen Cleopatra and Mary Stuart, and all the women famous in history for womanishness. The craft which spoke in her voice and her eyes was the sum and perfection of what, in all but the most noble ages, most men have wished women to have instead of high intellect. Perhaps her virtuosity was greatest when she was vulgar, as she sometimes was, for it was always in the character, and was the vulgarity that is seldom far from the human animal when it has only decorated its animal life and not built an ampler life on it. All that she did on the stage was done with an indescribable energy and sparkle that restored wonder-

fulness to old themes which in other hands would be dull. For the Paris playgoer a whole range of 'femininity' goes dim at her death, as a kind of film formed between our eyes and the great scamps of Molière when Coquelin died.

*May 4* At the play last night Peter Page whispered, *Saturday*. "What a good job that bomber fell on Clacton among the common herd and not on Frinton, where the nice people live!" Suspecting a leg-pull, I did not reprove him. At Rules afterwards Bruce Belfrage offered me the part of Lord Steyne in the B.B.C. version of *Vanity Fair*. Said my voice was just right. Five performances at fifteen guineas a time and expenses to Manchester, where they are doing it. I refused (1) on the high moral ground that it would be doing an actor out of a job, and (2) for the reason that the money wasn't enough! All the same, I should like to have played the late Marquis of Hertford's great-great-uncle, or whatever he was. I knew Hertford well—he was the most Firbankian of creatures—and even better when he was the Earl of Yarmouth, or "Y," as he was known to his friends. When he became "the most noble" he moved out of town for cheapness' sake. An extremely queer, saturnine-silly fellow, so bred out that he could hardly walk. One should take people as one finds them, and he was more than kind to me when I was ill at Torquay, where he lived.

Nos. 11 and 12 in my *Nouveaux Contes Scabreux*. No. 11 introduces a world-famous male dancer, whose impresario, to regularise his position and with an eye to the London County Council, marries the young man's mother.

No. 12 is suggested by this afternoon's perusal of Ursula Bloom's *The Log of No Lady*: "Aunt Mabel still retains her virginally nice mind. Sex has never reared its ugly head under her merino combinations." Am calling this *The Log of No Gentleman*.

*May 5* Ladies' Night at the Savage, held at Grosvenor *Sunday*. House. Sir William Bragg in the chair, pleading for literature in the time of the paper shortage, told us that only 2 per cent. of the paper of this country is taken up

by books. We drank the health of the oldest Savage present, Colonel Sir Arthur Holbrook, K.B.E., who has just turned ninety. His six sons served throughout the last war, and are now admirals, commanders, colonels, and so on in the present one. The old boy doesn't look a day over sixty and holds himself more upright than most Savages, and his voice filled the room. He told us, too, that in addition to his six sons he has ten grandsons holding commissions. Sat between Myra Hess and Irene Scharrer; they played two lovely canons by Schumann, in Debussy's arrangement, and afterwards the well-known waltz by Arensky—a perfect meringue. Delightful evening.

*May 6* Can English poetry be translated into French?  
*Monday.* I have been reading Félix Rose's *Les Grands Lyriques Anglais*, and here are a stanza of Keats's *Nightingale* and its alleged French equivalent :

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!  
 No hungry generations tread thee down;  
 The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
 In ancient days by emperor and clown :  
 Perhaps the self-same song that found a path  
 Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,  
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn;  
 The same that oft-times hath  
 Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam  
 Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

In M. Rose's French :

Un chant comme le tien est un don immortel  
 Abolissant le temps et la nature même.  
 Tel il fascina rois ou manants, tel  
 Il me retient captif, ton unique poème.  
 Peut-être ton ardent et suave invocation  
 Frappa de Ruth l'oreille et le cœur nostalgie,  
 Et, l'arrêtant parmi l'étrangère moisson,  
 Fit monter à ses yeux les pleurs d'un voeu magique?  
 Oui, souvent à nos yeux n'as-tu pas évoqué  
 Les féeriques visions de pays oubliés?

To my English ear this is not good French poetry. And then it omits too much. I find nothing here of casements, perilous seas, and foam. To prove that it can be done, if not perfectly

at least with stricter regard for one's author, here is the last verse of Hugo's *Booz Endormi*:

... et Ruth se demandait,  
Immobile, ouvrant l'œil à moitié sous ses voiles,  
Quel dieu, quel moissonneur de l'éternel été  
Avait, en s'en allant, négligemment jeté  
Cette faucale d'or dans le champ des étoiles.

The translator of this *must* account for *immobile*, *ouvrant l'œil*, *dieu*, *moissonneur*, *l'éternel été*, *faucale*, *champ*, and *étoiles*. Here is my effort:

And Ruth did ask,  
Motionless, rapt, lifting her eyes half-veiled,  
What harvester of summer all unflown,  
What parting god had negligently thrown  
His golden sickle on that starry field.

That, in my view, is at least near-poetry, and it gets in all the words. I sent it to Félix, who has not felicitated!

*May 7* Item from to-day's "For the Forces" programme, *Tuesday*. as given in the *Radio Times*: "7.50 More about photographing elephants."

On Sunday morning I saw the little Oriental gentleman who lives near Jock in Covent Garden wearing his new Chinese-red trousers which appear to be made of Christmas-cracker paper, and twirling a luminous and almost transparent greenish-yellow parasol. He was smoking a long cigar with unself-conscious nonchalance, and was so manifestly the gentleman that nobody stared. Jock says that when he passes, the only notice the market porters take is to stop swearing. Last night I saw supping with a lady at the Café Royal a very handsome, foreign-looking young man wearing a maroon blouse, dark blue trousers, cowhide boots, and a girdle from which hung a dagger. When he left the restaurant he donned a magnificent blue military overcoat emblazoned with many medal-ribbons, and carried in his hand a cap of white astrakhan. On inquiry I learned that he was a flying ace in the Finnish army. I am afraid that the manners of the West End's late suppers are less good than those of Covent Garden porters. We all stared a lot.

*May 8* Live a thousand years and I shall not repeat *Wednesday*. to-night's feat—that of emulating the mad King of Bavaria in having an entire theatre company playing to me alone. The theatre was the Arts, and the occasion was the second programme of the recently revived *Cave of Harmony*. At 11.20, the advertised time, the curtain went up on the two pianists and me, alone in my glory and attended only by a large whisky and soda. After ten minutes or so, in which the company sedulously avoided looking at me, I was joined by the charming boy, now a theatre-manager in his own right, who looked after his stepfather and my old friend, José Levy, with such devotion in his last illness. We sat there like the couple in the gallery at Mr Crummles's first night, "cracking nuts and wondering whether they made the whole audience." A little later four more couples came in, and spoiled it.

*May 9* Two letters. One, from Brother Edward, invites *Thursday*. me to liven up a dull page with these extracts from a scientific treatise published in 1776 :

Nothing but the most exemplary morals can give dignity to a man of small fortune.

In the university of Oxford, the greater part of the public professors have, for these many years, given up altogether even the pretence of teaching.

A gentleman, drunk with ale, has scarce ever been seen among us.

All for ourselves, and nothing for other people, seems, in every age of the world, to have been the vile maxim of the masters of mankind.

The most detestable of all employments, that of public executioner, is, in proportion to the quantity of work done, better paid than any common trade whatever.

The second letter, from Brother Harry, contains a snapshot, a verbal one, alas, of Brother Edward mounted behind him on a tandem bicycle! And I am reminded of our mother's rebuke to a Nonconformist clergyman who, leaning his bicycle against

the chapel wall prior to taking the service, had forgotten to remove his trouser-clips: "I am astonished, sir, that you can keep a serious mind and *twiddle your legs!*"

*May 10* Germany invaded Holland and Belgium early this *Friday*. morning.

*May 11* On my way to luncheon at the Three Arts Club *Saturday*, saw placards announcing the bombing of Brussels, Antwerp, Lyons, and other places. Prepared *facetiae* seemed a bit empty after this, and my old friend Princess Marie Louise, in the chair, made matters worse with a fine, classical, and, I believe, impromptu oration based on the events of the morning. It required some nerve after this to switch on to Women's Hats. But I had nothing else ready, so had to rely on Helen of Troy and Gertrude Stein to pull me through. Which, I think, they did.

At the Café Royal to-night heard of Chamberlain's resignation, and that the King had sent for Winston. Let's hope that Charles II's line in Shaw's new play, "I sometimes wonder whether young Jack Churchill hasn't the right stuff in him!" turns out to be a good omen.

*May 12* On arrival at the club last night found a letter from *Sunday*. Peter Murray Hill, the bookseller and actor, presenting me with two coloured lithographs of Malibran and some letters of Pauline Viardot Garcia. Most of the correspondence refers to the efforts of a Mr Mason, the director of the Birmingham Musical Festival, to extract an oratorio from Meyerbeer, then at his apogee and much too busy with his forthcoming opera, *L'Etoile du Nord*. But there is one personal letter showing some of that vivacity and charm which remained with the great singer till she was over eighty:

Yes, my dear Ella, I object to a large retriever—and I find out just this minute that my worse half objects to any sort of dog at all. So, dear, there is an end of it! For all that, thanks for your trouble. I hope it has neither prevented you from sleeping nor from having a good dinner.

Didn't I see you yesterday? Did you see me seeing you? I hope my god-child is decently wrapped up by this time. My love to it.

Excuse the extraordinary appearance on the paper. I am in the garden, and a spider having had the impertinence to come and read our *Oratorio* secret, has met with its death in consequence. I could not do less for our great Meyerbeer!

Do not be angry about the dog, dear. I really did not know that my hubby objected to having one now, but he says with reason that, being continually travelling about, we could not take the creature with us, and consequently could not enjoy it. I really think silkworms are decidedly more convenient pets.

Write to me to-morrow how you have liked your Cremorne trip. As we shall not be allowed to talk on Wednesday, you had better say beforehand all you have to say. You might learn to talk in the deaf and dumb way. At all events we shall make use of pantomime.

My most affectionate souvenirs to your dear parents, and with a dozen of kisses to divide between Constance and your charming little self,

Your loving  
PAULINE VIARDOT

Not bad English for a Spaniard. But, then, as a child of *four* Pauline spoke fluent Spanish (her mother tongue), French (she was born in Paris), English (acquired in her travels with her father and sister), and Italian. Before appearing in Germany she made herself proficient in that language, and I strongly suspect that her friendship with Turgenev gave her more than a smattering of Russian.

*May 13* Centenary of Alphonse Daudet. During the last *Monday*. war I was present at a performance of *L'Arlésienne*

with Bizet's music in the Roman arena at Arles. I remember every detail of the scene. In the front row of the so-called balcony—the first tier of the old arena—an enormous negro with a red fez shone and basked and rolled his bilious eyes. Boys whooped and skylarked, clambering over the tiers, leaping from arch to arch, and chasing one another up and down the stone stairways. Seagulls from the Mediter-

ranean—*mouettes*, the peasant of the Midi calls them—wheeled and complained high in the blue, and once one of those birds which the Provençal calls a *grand duc* paused on its majestic journey for a contemptuous glance at the mimic scene. Tessandier played Rose.

And here is another recollection. In the course of my hay-purchasing on behalf of the Army I stumbled, by accident, on the *moulin* from which Daudet's famous *Lettres* were written. That night in the dingy salon of the little hotel at Arles I committed this to my notebook :

Not a very imposing ruin, this overgrown pepper-box with its inexplicable stumps of wings. In some moods the visitor will find it entirely commonplace, in others he will see in it a dwelling of dwarfs from a fairy-tale by Hans Andersen, or the abode of sugar-plum fairies from a ballet. Over the doorway a mauve plate bears in gold lettering the inscription :

*Je revenais au moulin  
songer au livre que j'écrirais plus tard  
et que je daterais de ma ruine  
aux ailes mortes.*

A. DAUDET

The mill is perched on a tiny eminence. At your feet the landscape, dusty scrub and stunted almond-tree, spreads to the steel-blue Rhône. The distant hills are blue too, but it is a blue without hesitation, the turquoise and sapphire of an opera-singer's jewels. The roads, which in a less logical country would be winding their way to the heart of some mystery, gleam here like the explicit streamers of a prima-donna's bouquet. Of haze and middle distance, doubt and surmise, nothing ; the horizon is as well-defined as a saucer's rim. The sun dipping below this rim will plunge the world into brilliant obscurity, into night without languor. There is too much that is uncompromising in the glory of the Provençal day. Even though it should rain, which is unthinkable, the country will but blossom into purple and red, like the heart of Maud's lover. Only it will be the purple and red of the peasant's immemorial umbrella, the peacock sheen, the unreasonable iridescence of village panoplies. At sundown all living things go to a

concerted rest with the precision of an orchestra : the day's piece is played. From this decided country twilight has been banished, day surrendering to night without parley.

From the mill we take the little path to the château, imposing, elegant, and untidy like all French châteaux. The façade is delicate-tinted like the best notepaper, but the drive is choked with weeds, and tall rank grasses climb the pale blue trellised gates. Though the house is now a hospital the owner shows me the room in which Daudet actually wrote the famous *Lettres*—dated with so innocent a fiction from the tumble-down windmill—the grotto, *le cagnard*, to which in moments of weariness, *la cagne*, the author would repair to meditate, think out a sentence, drop off into a doze. On the front of the house is this inscription, again in gold lettering on a mauve ground :

*Maison Bénie ! que de fois  
je suis venu là, me reprendre  
à la Nature, me guérir  
de Paris et de ses fièvres !*

Thus writes Daudet, and one wonders. Did he really want to be cured of Paris and its fevers ? How much of sincerity was there in his craving for repose ? How long was it before he began to hanker after his beloved Paris ?

Hear Daudet himself on his sickness of soul ! He is apostrophising a soldier on furlough who, countryman though he be, has lost his taste for hedgerows, and dreams of Paris, drumming to while away his leave :

“ Rêve, rêve, pauvre homme. . . . Si tu as la nostalgie de ta caserne, est-ce que, moi, je n'ai la nostalgie de la mienne ? Mon Paris me poursuit jusqu'ici comme le tien. Tu joues du tambour sous les pins, toi ! Moi, j'y fais de la copie. . . . Ah ! les bons Provençaux que nous faisons ! Là-bas dans les casernes de Paris nous regrettions nos Alpines bleues et l'odeur sauvage des lavandes ; maintenant, ici, en pleine Provence, la caserne nous manque, et tout ce qui la rappelle nous est cher. . . .”

And as Gouguet François, *dit Pistolet*, drummer of the 31st regiment of the line, drums his way down the hill Daudet cries :

“ Et moi, couché dans l'herbe, malade de nostalgie, je crois voir, au bruit du tambour qui s'éloigne, tout mon

Paris défiler entre les pins. . . . Ah ! Paris ! . . . Toujours Paris ! ”

I cannot think I am wrong in harking back to old recollections with the greatest battle of all time beginning to rage. With the *Sunday Times* cutting my space to almost nothing, and the *Daily Express* temporarily<sup>4</sup> outing me altogether, I have very little to do. The notion of diarising Daudet occurred to me while I was sitting on a form<sup>5</sup> at the Zoo, dividing my attention between voles and vacancy.

*May 14* Dinner and bridge at Gordon Williams's. ~~The~~  
*Tuesday.* Moiseiwitsches there. Annie told us of a beautiful spoonerism by Daisy Kennedy, Benno's first wife : “ I will now play a Chocturne by Nopin ! ”

*May 15* My Saturday *Express* article was all about John *Wednesday*. Bailey's *A Shorter Boswell*, and how I wish there were more Baileys in the field to bring culture to those whose time is limited. Why not cream of Carlyle, and essence of Emerson ? Why not a musical Bailey to condense Wagner's *Ring* into a single opera ? To-day I receive a letter from the Hon. Mrs Robert Lyttelton saying that her great-great-grandfather was Bennet Langton. It was Langton and Beauclerk who knocked up Dr Johnson at three in the morning and drew from him the famous, “ What, is it you, you dogs ! I'll have a frisk with you.” The letter goes on : “ Mr John Bailey married my late husband's sister, so I almost feel as if we had Dr Johnson in the family.” I should think so indeed ! Such propinquity is like being descended from both Queen Elizabeth and Queen Victoria. Jock : “ Havers, mon ! You mean Malibran and Sarah Bernhardt ! ”

*May 16* Extract from letter to his parents written by my *Thursday.* godson Paul :

I have written the following letter to a godson of mine who will soon be one year old :

“ 2nd Lieut. P. E. Dehn presents his compliments to Master Richard Rothwell Bolton on the occasion of his first

birthday, and has the honour to report that he is at present busily engaged in setting the world more to Master Bolton's liking.

"If, during this war, he is as unsuccessful in making the world safe for Master Bolton as, during the last war, 2nd Lieut. Dehn's godfather was unsuccessful in making it safe for 2nd Lieut. Dehn, he will consider humanity a very poor thing indeed; and trusts that Master Bolton, on attaining years of *discretéion*, will do all he can to improve it.

"Should London still be standing, a gift will follow on 2nd Lieut. Dehn's return to civilisation, from which, by the will of the High Command, he is at the moment an unthinkable number of miles distant."

*May 18* The reactions of my household during this first Saturday. week of the 'real war have been characteristic.

FRED: Has spent the time playing about with bricks and cement to no apparent purpose; the result, in my opinion, is to make the dug-out unnecessarily strong for splinters and not strong enough for a bomb. CHARLES: I came into the front room and found my house-boy waltzing to the gramophone. Jock: Greatly concerned about the destruction of his beloved Holland and badgering me with this question: Would I, to put an end to war for ever, sacrifice my life, see my work obliterated, and myself totally expunged from the scheme of things? Is vastly shocked when I modestly say I should like time to consider my answer. It appears that Hugh Walpole, John Gielgud, and all Jock's friends would jump at the chance of such an honour. To which I retort that there isn't going to be any honour; if his question is to mean anything the sacrifice must be anonymous. Jock still seriously shocked because I refuse to say yes at once. Not satisfied even when I say I hope I shouldn't be such a skunk as to refuse. MYSELF: At the beginning of the week complete *frousse*, or, if I must put it in English, wind up. Took myself in hand with some measure of success, largely owing to a timely recollection of that passage in which Johnson tells Boswell that to attempt to think down distressing thoughts is madness. A man so afflicted must divert such thoughts and not combat with them. Boswell asking whether a course of chemistry would be helpful, John-

son said chemistry, or rope-dancing, or anything which would provide a retreat for the mind. Mrs Crupp's remedy ran on similar lines: "You are a young gentleman, Mr Copperfull, and my adwice to you is, to cheer up, Sir, to keep a good heart, and to know your own walue. If you was to take to skittles, now, which is healthy, you might find it divert your mind." Johnson and Dickens, bicarbonate of soda, bromide, a certain amount of resolution, and the news that the Germans are being held, for the moment at least, are responsible for my being reasonably restored to-day. One must keep something in reserve for the air raids, which now seem certain. By the way, Bernard Darwin's article yesterday had a passage of wider application than he perhaps meant, except that writers should be given the credit of their implications:

It has often been pointed out that when you are a hole or two down in a golf match as long as you do not crack you keep your opponent on the stretch, and that if the tension goes on long enough it is he who will crack. It is a lesson that we can never take too much or too often to heart, and these magicians of table-tennis inculcate it as well as anyone I ever saw. Golf is not, as are most others, a game of direct attack and defence; but the power of defence, of dour, obstinate resistance, is nevertheless beyond all price.

Hitler, I think, must be puzzled by the British character. Here we are, with our backs to the wall, fighting for our lives, and all the cliché-ridden rest of it, and yet finding time to turn up at Lord's in our hundreds to watch twenty-two young men disporting themselves at cricket. The B.B.C. *versus* the Balloon Barrage.

*May 19* I am furious. Yesterday morning Jock spotted this *Sunday.* in a second-hand bookseller's catalogue:

545. LANQUINE (Clement): *La Malibran, Paris,*  
N.D., 32 illustrations, wrapper . . . 4s.

Without a word to me Jock telephoned the bookseller, asking him to put this treasure on one side and saying that he would call for it later in the day. The bookseller agreed. Jock called in the evening, only to be told that, while his master was at

lunch, the assistant had inadvertently sold Jock's intended gift to me to some passing stranger. This calamity has started my old Malibran fever all over again, to be allayed only by homœopathic means. Jock arranges for this by producing from my own shelves my own long-forgotten *The Stage: Both Before and Behind the Curtain*, by Alfred Bunn, "Late Lessee of the Theatres Royal Drury Lane and Covent Garden." By a happy chance it turns out to be this book's centenary year, the three volumes appearing in 1840.

Bunn it was who bit Macready's finger when "the great W.C.M.," labouring under some fancied grievance, made a murderous assault on him in his own managerial room. Macready, in his diary, was very penitent about this. What's in a name? Quite a lot, when it is a foolish name like Bunn. Wit cannot, you would say, reside in a man so called. Yet Bunn was distinctly witty, as these volumes prove everywhere :

Heard Persiani again : would that her voice were not so thin ! But what a singer ! The house looked very much like a meeting of creditors—Jews, attorneys and their clerks, bailiffs and their followers, Cyprians and their swains, occupying every other box, and full half the pit. . . .

By way of passing an intellectual day we breakfasted first —then dragged the fish-ponds, shot at the guinea-fowls with rifles, then lunched, hunted a cat in a cherry-tree, pistol fired, then had a drive, dined, played billiards, smashed some grilled bones, demolished some beakers of punch, and then to bed.

Bunn also had an eye and ear for the good thing :

On the occasion of the King's visit Mr Liston and myself were conversing in the ante-room of the Royal box with a nobleman attached to the household, when one of the pages, passing by and not seeing his lordship, slapped the comedian on the back, ejaculating, "D'y'e think you'll make him laugh to-night ? He was devilish stupid at dinner ! " . . .

There is a scathing quality about the fellow that I greatly like :

Bishop has a classical and gentlemanly mind, which is as

rare as it is pleasant to meet with in any one whose back has once rubbed against the scenes of a theatre. . . .

The conceit of an author is proverbial; and with the exception of a select few, whose superiority will not admit of any alloy of vanity, there can be no question of the truth of the proverb. But what is that conceit to the conceit of an actor? A WART to OSSA. An author, after all, is but vain upon one point; an actor is vain upon all. You can scarcely persuade the most crooked varlet that ever presented himself at a stage-door for examination that he is not "the glass of fashion, and the mould of form"; or many a hound who literally yelps out his notes that he is not a second Rubini. You can impress on the minds of very few who have once crossed the stage that the British nation to a man is not thinking of them morning, noon, and night; while, excepting at the particular moment they are "strutting and fretting" before their eyes, the public never cast a thought upon them. . . .

Saw Charles Kean perform *Claude Melnotte* in Sir E. Bulwer's drama of *The Lady of Lyons*. A more red-hot Port St Martin, Surrey, Coburg, or what you will melodrama was never seen. It contains, amidst some good situations unskilfully worked up, and amongst some admirable ideas bombastically expressed, as much sheer nonsense as was ever palmed on reader or spectator.

And now for my goddess Malibran! Bunn says of her:

The energy of her character eventually destroyed this astonishing woman; and the only wonder to me is that the melancholy and premature event which we shall have by-and-by to record did not take place sooner. The powerful and conflicting elements mingled in her composition were gifts indeed, but of a very fatal nature—the mind was far too great for the body, and it did not require any wonderful gift of prophecy to foresee that in their contention the triumph would be but short, however brilliant and decisive. Themistocles, in accounting for his own watchfulness, used to say that the trophies of Miltiades would not let him sleep. The idea that the fame of any living artist could approach hers was enough to eat her heart away, if nothing else had ever preyed upon it.

*Espiègle enfant ce soir, sainte artiste demain* is Musset's

phrase for burning the candle at both ends. Here was Malibran's way, according to Bunn :

During her late professional visit to London, I was leaving the theatre one evening, and going into Malibran's room I found her, after the performance of *La Sonnambula*, dressing for an evening concert. I remonstrated with her, pointed out the inroads she was making on her constitution, and urged her to send an excuse. She promised to do so; and in a belief she would keep that promise I bade her good-night, and drove home to Brompton. I was reading in bed about half an hour after the midnight chime, when the bell of the outer gate was rung violently, and on its being answered, I heard a voice say, "Tell Mr Bunn not to get up—I am only come for a little fresh air in his garden." I dressed, and found in one of the walks Madame Malibran, Monsieur de Bériot, and Monsieur Thalberg, from whom I learnt that, despite all my injunctions, she had been to TWO concerts, gone home afterwards to undress, and dress, and had taken a fancy to this slight country trip at such an extraordinary hour. I had supper laid under a huge walnut-tree which overshadowed the entire southern aspect of the house; and beneath its umbrage some viands, especially aided by a favourite beverage of hers—home-brewed beer—and (don't start, readers !) ONIONS. She pulled them fresh from their beds, and, thus humbly entertained, she seemed to be as happy as possible. She warbled, as late as three into the morning, some of her most enchanting strains, and wound up by saying, "Now I have had my supper I will go and steal my breakfast"; and running into the hen-house emptied every nest, and started off to town.

I have already described in *Ego* this singer's astonishing performance in Balfe's *Maid of Artois*. At the end of the opera she had a prolonged shake on B flat in alt, and Bunn quotes the critic of the *Morning Post* :

It was, in sooth, a wondrous burst, and it was cruel to demand it a second time. The curtain however drew up, and she again went through what would on the score appear an almost incredible task. A storm of cheering summoned her after the act-drop fell, and Templeton led her forward, when the waving of hats, handkerchiefs, etc., could not be exceeded even at La Scala.

To explain the incredible encore Bunn has this :

I had occasion, during its last rehearsal but one, to express myself in strong terms at her leaving the stage for more than an hour and a half, to go and gain £25 at a morning concert. Neither the concerted pieces of music, nor the situations of the drama in which she was involved, could possibly be proceeded with, and the great stake we were then contending for was likely to be placed in jeopardy by an unworthy grasp at a few pounds, to the prejudice of a theatre paying her nightly five times as much. She knew she had done wrong, and she atoned for it by her genius, while her pride would not have permitted her to do so. She had borne along the two first acts on the first night of performance in such a flood of triumph that she was bent, by some almost superhuman effort, to continue its glory to the final fall of the curtain. I went into her dressing-room previous to the commencement of the third act, to ask how she felt, and she replied, "Very tired, but" (and here her eye of fire suddenly lighted up) "you angry devil, if you will contrive to get me a pint of porter in the desert you shall have an encore to your finale." Had I been dealing with any other performer I should perhaps have hesitated in complying with a request that might have been dangerous in its application at the moment; but to check her powers was to annihilate them. I therefore arranged that, behind the pile of drifted sand on which she falls in a state of exhaustion towards the close of the desert scene, a small aperture should be made in the stage; and it is a fact that, from underneath the stage through that aperture, a pewter pint of porter was conveyed to the parched lips of this rare child of song, which so revived her, after the terrible exertion the scene led to, that she electrified the audience, and had strength to repeat the charm, with the finale to the *Maid of Artois*. The novelty of the circumstance so tickled her fancy, and the draught itself was so extremely refreshing, that it was arranged, during the subsequent run of the opera, for the negro slave at the head of the governor's procession to have in the gourd suspended from his neck the same quantity of the same beverage, to be applied to her lips on his first beholding the apparently dying Isoline.

As that beverage restored Malibran, so has setting down the

above in some measure restored me after my cruel disappointment in the matter of the lost *bouquin*.

*May 20* Preposterous letter from Wales asking me for *Monday*. "the words and music of a song I heard sung by a comedian whose name I cannot recollect at the Swansea Empire shortly after the end of the Great War. The song was entitled *It is Only an Empty Bottle.*" But suppose this is some Welsh miner's form of escapism? Properly viewed, I see no difference whatever between this and my escapism for to-day, which has taken the form of dipping into the re-issue in Everyman's Library of Fanny Burney's diary. In the entry for July 29th, 1789, I found this passage which, when the opportunity arises, I shall bring up to date:

We went to the play, and saw Mrs Siddons in Rosalind. She looked beautifully, but too large for that shepherd's dress; and her gaiety sits not naturally upon her—it seems more like disguised gravity.

Also this delightful thing:

The King bathes, and with great success; a machine follows the Royal one into the sea, filled with fiddlers, who play *God Save the King*, as his Majesty takes his plunge!

*May 22* Esmé Percy presents me with an excessively *Wednesday*. handsome ivory and malacca walking-stick of the nineties. This was originally given to him by Alfred Douglas, and was the stick used by Francis Sullivan in the play about Oscar Wilde at the Arts Theatre.

*May 24* Lunched with Francis Sullivan at the Coq d'Or. Friday. Came across this in Sydney Smith:

There is not a better man than Lord John Russell; but his worst failure is that he is utterly ignorant of all moral fear; there is nothing he would not undertake. I believe he would perform the operation for the stone—build St Peter's—or assume (with or without ten minutes' notice) the command of the Channel Fleet: and no one would discover by his manner that the patient had died—the

Church tumbled down—and the Channel Fleet been knocked to atoms.

May 25    Brother Edward writes :  
Saturday.

There is *no power on earth* will jockey me into despondency. Luther, Buckle, Kant, Spinoza, and Hegel teach me that there is an ethical law of balance which rules the world—and the equipoise will be adjusted ; though, perhaps, not in our time. But what does that matter ?

The efficacy of prayer ? I incline to Spinoza's view. We may be perfectly sure that German pastors are invoking the aid of God at the same moment that our English vicars are doing *their* bit for *our* side. But it is presumptuous for *any* mortal to attempt to force the Almighty to a decision.

Nay, further (says Spinoza), God *cannot* make such decisions, any more than He can be angry, repentant, cruel, forgetful, callous—for all those are purely human qualities and imply weakness. But God is perfect ; and in perfection there is no place for weakness.

Therefore, I wholly deprecate this consecration of certain Sundays to prayer. Oh, for a John Knox, a Wesley, a Jeremy Taylor ! And if Spinoza is wrong, and God *can* be influenced, I should expect the following answer (to us) from Him :

“ Help yourselves first, before you ask My help ! Suppress the inanities and futilities of your amusement abodes ; cancel your horse-racings, and your circular careerings of greyhounds. Gape no more at what is but an illusory piece of celluloid ; neither shuffle your feet to the battered assault and pathetic drone of your strange instruments. Then I may think about it ! ”

E. A.

May 27    In Jeremy Taylor came across this : “ If our death *Monday*. could be put off a little longer, what advantage can it be in the accounts of nature or felicity ? They that three thousand years agone died unwillingly, and stopped death two days or stayed it a week, what is their gain ? *Where is that week ?* ” Grand English, specious argument ! Where, on these lines, is any man's whole lifetime ?

May 28 King Leopold of Belgium throws in his hand. All Tuesday. the B.E.F. in Flanders trapped. Something like eighteen divisions. Everybody is asking how many, if any, can be got out.

May 29 A knight of my acquaintance came into my box Wednesday. after the first half of *The Tempest* at the Old Vic to say that he had dined with a Big Noise who told him that we had already got 60,000 men away from Dunkirk, that the greatest military feat in history is now under way, and that it's a dead secret. Paid very little attention to the second half of the play until struck by Prospero's

The rarer action is  
In virtue than in vengeance: they being penitent,  
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend  
Not a frown further.

This is pure *Manchester Guardian*. The snag, of course, is "they being penitent." Suppose the make-up of the defeated enemy does not include penitence?

May 30 Postcard from Clifford Bax:  
Thursday.

Ingrate! Monster! Hypocrite!

In 1907 I was supping at the Rendezvous Restaurant. A waiter dropped a pile of plates; and the Proprietor hissed "hypocrite!", as the fiercest term of abuse which he could think of.

Where is my book of Alekhin's chess-games? There,—under your percipient nose: that nose which is so tedious to the grindstone. Assemble paper, stamp, string, pen, ink and remorse, and speed the book homewards.

Item, when are you and Jock coming to play a game with me? You can have White.

June 1 Having some business at Chelmsford, I decide to Saturday. go via Southend. The country very lovely and heart-searching. Poppies everywhere, and the little gardens tended as I remember them. All the public lawn-tennis courts full, and on the bowling-greens scores of Drakes finishing their games.

If Dotheboys Hall has been pulled down, it would seem that

Dotheboys Homes still exist. While at Chelmsford I hear of a boy of seventeen remanded for twenty-one days on a charge of stealing from an A.R.P. warden's hut a crate and four empty beer-bottles for which he was proposing to get two shillings. Orphaned early, this lad has spent nine years in various 'homes,' and has never been taught to read or write. They discovered this in the prison hospital, where he had to be given picture-books ! Discussing this at the club to-night, I am told that Littlewood's Pools are the only reason why the Welsh miner on leaving school does not at once revert to complete illiteracy.

*June 2* Having no money is teaching me what Timon of *Sunday*. Athens learned—that the only result of paying for other people is their rage when it stops.

*June 3* Long pow-wow with Stanley Rubinstein, who says *Monday*. that he is bound to tell me that I can get out of all my financial difficulties, including income tax, by going bankrupt. But that he is a hundred per cent. against such a course. To which I reply that I am two hundred per cent. against it unless I am badgered into it ! I agree with Stanley that anything of the sort would be unpatriotic and disgraceful. But the badgering may leave me no other way out. The difficulty, as usual, is the income-tax people, who cannot be brought to understand that I am unable to reap my articles unless I first sow them. Here, for example, is a story gleaned this week from the *Café Royal*. It was told me by a naval officer in charge of one of the ships during the Dunkirk episode. An English Army officer who was all in, finding no place to sit down, let alone lie, finally espied a life-boat containing flags and covered with a tarpaulin. Creeping under the tarpaulin, he fell into a deep and blissful sleep, from which he did not awake till some hours later. Lifting the tarpaulin and peeping over the edge of the boat, he found that he was back at Dunkirk. He had done the round trip !

That little yarn makes the article in which it is going to appear. Now say my supper-bill for the week comes to £3.

And say I get £25 for the article. Deducting £3 for expenses and £8 6s. 8d. for my one-third share, which is what Rubin-stein allows me, the transaction leaves my creditors with a net profit of £13 13s. 4d. On the other hand, sitting on my behind at Bognor produces just exactly nothing at all, except a net loss of 4d. on the cup of cocoa which my creditors will presumably not deny me. The sentiment may be Skimpolean, but the logic is the logic of fact.

The trouble is that I understand arithmetic and that the Revenue authorities don't. Stanley says that they would prefer my smoking a bad cigar, writing a bad article, and losing my job, to a good cigar and a good article ensuring the continuance of that job. And that when, putting it in language that a child could understand, I say what about the bad cigar making me sick, and the bad article making my editor sick of me, they merely shrug their shoulders. It's the old puritanical passion for preaching all over again ; so long as the Revenue can indulge in its habit of scolding naughty boys it doesn't mind whether it gets the money or not. In a way I understand. No man who had the imagination to conceive a debt (Balzac) and no man whose horizon was not blotted out by a smokable cigar (Agate) would be a tax-collector. Let one of these black-coated gentry read page 76 of the present book and then ask himself how much time such a programme leaves for hanging about bus-stops and nice calculations about Tubes.

But I warn the Revenue and my creditors generally that I am nearing the end of my patience. It is a long worm that has no turning, and the turn this worm will take if not left reasonably alone is Carey Street. If my creditors do not want me to earn money for them let them shut me up altogether ; if they want me to go on earning some thousands a year for them let them shut up. Since January 1st, 1939, they have had eightpence out of every shilling the worm has made. At nine-pence it gets restive, and at tenpence it turns.

*June 4*      Great German attack massing in France.

*Tuesday.*      Was tempted by a golden evening to go for a walk on Hampstead Heath. Spent a couple of

hours watching the crowds. Went into Jack Straw's Castle for a drink, and when I came out was amazed at the number of balloons. Everybody in excellent spirits and very little war-talk.

*June 5*      The Great Attack launched.

*Wednesday.*    Life goes on in the most extraordinary way.

This evening two hefty bricklayers of military age presented themselves, having<sup>1</sup> been sent by the landlord to re-build my garden wall, which fell down during the great frost last winter. They had been putting up air-raid shelters all day, and proposed to attend to my wall in their spare time. But is there any spare time left? It seems to me that my wall should wait.

*June 6*      First proofs of *Ego 4* to hand just as the wireless *Thursday.* announces the arrival of the last of the 335,000

men saved from Dunkirk. I hope and believe this extraordinary mixture of private and public affairs will not be confounded with the opening sentence of a woman's novel arriving at the same time as the proofs: "It seemed to Gail Partner a significant fact that the very day on which she accepted Bill Cardew's offer of marriage England declared war against Germany"!

*June 7*      From Brother Edward:

*Friday.*

I find Hegel's *Philosophie des Geistes* very comforting during the "nächtliche, vier-Uhr-dauernde" air-raids that we are experiencing here. I don't understand a word of it. I thought Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* a hard nut to crack; but it is a *fondant* compared with Hegel!

*June 8*      "Let Rome in Tiber melt!" said Mark Antony. *Saturday.* Meaning that nothing was going to make him sidetrack Cleopatra. This afternoon I saw a landau drawn by two magnificent, high-stepping bays, and in it an old lady with purple veil, hat, sunshade, and the air and poise

of Queen Victoria. She was obviously saying to herself, "Let London melt in Thames ! Nothing is going to interfere with my afternoon drive ! " It is only fair to add that the coachman was much over military age and the footman much below it. " Go it, old girl ! " said the workman on the steps of St Paul's to Queen Victoria on her Diamond Jubilee. I was so much impressed with the spectacle of this old girl 'going it' that I jumped into a taxi and passed and re-passed the cavalcade half a dozen times.

*June 9* The great danger threatening this country at the *Sunday* moment is its army of sleek, supercilious Civil Servants. The proper thing to do is to sack the entire lot of smug, pompous, soft-hatted, soft-headed obstructionists, and replace them by hard-hatted, hard-headed, common little men from Lancashire, Yorkshire, and the Midlands, and Cockneys who owe their education to their mother-wit. Let History not record that the second Battle of Waterloo was *lost* on the playing-fields of Eton.

*June 10* Every schoolboy knows what the weather was like *Monday*. on the night before Cæsar's murder. Other than schoolboys asked themselves what to-day's weather portended—a dense, Ancient Mariner-like, white mist with a small copper sun. I have never seen anything like it even in November, and it lasted all through this day on which Mussolini declared war on France. Is the Pathetic Fallacy less fallacious than we think ?

*A Week Later.* France has surrendered, and this country is back in 1805, 1667, 1588, 1066, or 55 B.C. If at this point I am expected to say something about the inviolacy of the British hearth and the sanctity of the British home, the Union Jack in a word, I am afraid I shall disappoint. But as a dramatic critic I still retain my sense of good and bad style in drama. It is worse than fustian, it is untrue, to say that the future of this country is on the knees of the gods. It isn't. It

is in our own hands. I do not believe in the Powers of Darkness except as a play. What said Shakespeare's Bastard? "Come the three corners of the world in arms . . ." Well, they have come, and it is not we who are going to rue.

I would break off here but for the fact that I should be ending on a note I have sedulously avoided. Harking back to my proper key, it occurs to me that I have not recorded any of my dreams. Here is one I had last night. I am looking into the *Dictionary of National Biography* in the year 3000, and I find this :

AGATE, James (late 19th–middle 20th century), diarist and brother of the great wit. Is believed to have written criticisms of the theatre, which still functioned in England at that time, though no trace of these remains. In 2792 the Diaries, of which *Ego 4* is generally regarded as the best, were translated into German by Dr Ebing von Afterkrafft, with Introduction and Notes by Professor Beinzieher; the twenty-four volumes contain the passages suppressed during the author's lifetime, and full transcripts of the 180 *Contes Scabreux* and *Nouveaux Contes Scabreux*. As a prose-writer Agate is vigorous, though here and there obscure. In the year 2907, and in the hope of throwing further light on English morals and manners in the 20th century, the diarist's grave at Southend was opened. Nothing was found except *writs*.



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